

SOBORNOST

St. Thomas the Apostle Orthodox Church

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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

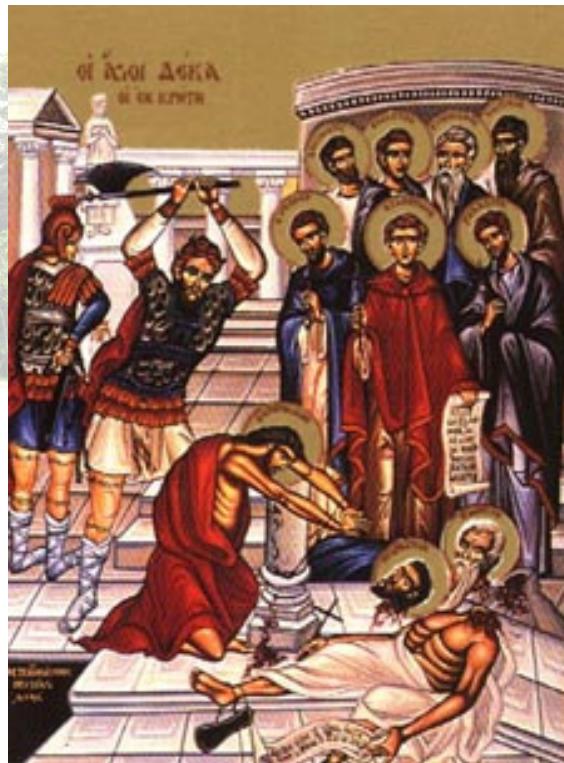
Saturday: Confession 5:00 PM

Great Vespers 5:30 PM

Sunday: Matins (Orthros) 8:45 AM

Sunday School 9:30 AM

Divine Liturgy 10:00 AM



December 23, 2018 – 30th Sunday After Pentecost | Forefeast of Nativity | Sunday Before Nativity | 10 Martyrs of Crete

The Sunday before the Nativity of the Lord (December 18-24) is known as the Sunday of the Holy Fathers. On this day the Church commemorates all those who were well-pleasing to God from all ages, from Adam to Saint Joseph the Betrothed of the Most Holy Theotokos, those who are mentioned in the genealogy of Luke 3:23-38. The holy prophets and prophetesses are also remembered today, especially the Prophet Daniel and the three holy youths.

The Forefeast of the Nativity of the Lord begins on December 20. From now on, most of the liturgical hymns will be concerned with the birth of the Savior. At Compline on this fourth day of the prefeast of the Nativity we sing, “Let us purify our minds, washing ourselves with the divine Mysteries; let us draw near in soul and body to Bethlehem, that we may behold the fearful dispensation of the birth of the Lord” (Ode Five of the Canon).

The Ten Holy Martyrs of Crete: Theodulus, Saturninus, Euporus, Gelasius, Eunician, Zoticus, Pompilius, Agathopus, Basilides and Evaristus suffered for Christ during the third century under the emperor Decius (249-251). The governor of Crete, also named Decius, fiercely persecuted the Church, and arrested anyone

who believed in Christ. Once, ten Christians were brought before him from various cities of Crete, who at the trial steadfastly confessed their faith in Christ and refused to worship idols. For thirty days they were subjected to cruel tortures, and with the help of God they all persevered, glorifying God. Before their death they prayed that the Lord would enlighten their torturers with the light of the true Faith. Since pain did not influence them, the saints were beheaded.

St Paul of Constantinople (November 6) visited Crete about a hundred years later. He took the relics of the holy martyrs to Constantinople to serve as a protection for the city, and a source of blessings for the faithful. (*from oca.org*)

Today's Epistle Lesson – St. Paul's Letter to the Hebrews 11:9-10,17-23,32-40

Brethren, by faith Abraham dwelt in the land of promise as *in* a foreign country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise; for he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker *is* God.

By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises offered up his only begotten *son*, of whom it was said, “In Isaac your seed shall be called,” concluding that God *was* able to raise *him* up, even from the dead, from which he also received him in a figurative sense. By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come. By faith Jacob, when he was dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph, and worshiped, *leaning* on the top of his staff. By faith Joseph, when he was dying, made mention of the departure of the children of Israel, and gave instructions concerning his bones. By faith Moses, when he was born, was hidden three months by his parents, because they saw *he was* a beautiful child; and they were not afraid of the king’s command.

And what more shall I say? For the time would fail me to tell of Gideon and Barak and Samson and Jephthah, also *of* David and Samuel and the prophets: who through faith subdued kingdoms, worked righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, became valiant in battle, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. Women received their dead raised to life again. Others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection. Still others had trial of mockings and scourgings, yes, and of chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, were tempted, were slain with the sword. They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented — of whom the world was not worthy. They wandered in deserts and mountains, *in* dens and caves of the earth. And all these, having obtained a good testimony through faith, did not receive the promise, God having provided something better for us, that they should not be made perfect apart from us.



Today's Gospel Lesson – Saint Matthew 1:1-25

The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham: Abraham begot Isaac, Isaac begot Jacob, and Jacob begot Judah and his brothers. Judah begot Perez and Zerah by Tamar, Perez begot Hezron, and Hezron begot Ram. Ram begot Amminadab, Amminadab begot Nahshon, and Nahshon begot Salmon. Salmon begot Boaz by Rahab, Boaz begot Obed by Ruth, Obed begot Jesse, and Jesse begot David the king. David the king begot Solomon by her *who had been the wife of Uriah*. Solomon begot Rehoboam, Rehoboam begot Abijah, and Abijah begot Asa. Asa begot Jehoshaphat, Jehoshaphat begot Joram, and Joram begot Uzziah. Uzziah begot Jotham, Jotham begot Ahaz, and Ahaz begot Hezekiah. Hezekiah begot Manasseh, Manasseh begot Amon, and Amon begot Josiah. Josiah begot Jeconiah and his brothers about the time they were carried away to Babylon.

And after they were brought to Babylon, Jeconiah begot Shealtiel, and Shealtiel begot Zerubbabel. Zerubbabel begot Abiud, Abiud begot Eliakim, and Eliakim begot Azor. Azor begot Zadok, Zadok begot Achim, and Achim begot Eliud. Eliud begot Eleazar, Eleazar begot Matthan, and Matthan begot Jacob. And Jacob begot Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus who is called Christ. So all the generations from Abraham to David *are* fourteen generations, from David until the captivity in Babylon *are* fourteen generations, and from the captivity in Babylon until the Christ *are* fourteen generations.

Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: After His mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Spirit. Then Joseph her husband, being a just *man*, and not wanting to make her a public example, was minded to put her away secretly. But while he thought about these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, “Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take to you Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins.” So all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying: “Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel,” which is translated, “God with us.” Then Joseph, being aroused from sleep, did as the angel of the Lord commanded him and took to him his wife, and did not know her till she had brought forth her firstborn Son. And he called His name Jesus.





Office of the Bishop
312 Garfield Street
Johnstown, PA 15906

Protocol No. 20/2018
December 14, 2018

Glory to Jesus Christ!
Dear Diocesan Parents and Children,

Our Diocese is pleased to announce a new endeavor to support parents as they raise their children. The endeavor is a series of Parenting Workshops designed to help parents raise their children in the Faith. The title of the series is “Raising Believing Children” and will focus on the ways parents can help their children stay faithful to Christ and His Church in a world that is filled with doubt and most often works against their Faith. The Workshops are for parents of any age – you’re never too old to be a son or daughter, and likewise you’re never too old to be a parent! This series of Parenting Workshops will be hosted by different Churches and Deaneries around our Diocese starting in March 2019. The first such Workshop will be hosted by our parish of Sts. Peter and Paul in Rockaway, NJ on March 2, 2019. You will find information about this first Workshop on our Diocesan Website - acrod.org.

First, know that I love you and pray for you. Also know that while God has not called me to be a parent, He has called me to shepherd His flock which includes you and your children. You are my spiritual children and this new series of Workshops is designed specifically for you as you seek to raise your children in the Faith. I am with you in this most-important calling.

Second, I ask you to take advantage of this new offering from our Diocese. Attend the Workshops that are hosted either in your Parish or by your Deanery. Don’t miss out on these opportunities. Come together with other parents to learn from and support each other.

Information about this series of Parenting Workshops can be found on our Diocesan Website at acrod.org. Look for the Diocesan Parenting Workshop Series logo.

Looking forward to offering you this new resource in the Faith, with blessing I remain

Working in His Vineyard with many prayers and love,

+Metropolitan Gregory

+ Metropolitan Gregory of Nyssa

PARENTING WORKSHOP

Raising Believing Children

SPECIAL GUESTS
HIS EMINENCE, METROPOLITAN
GREGORY OF NYSSA
AND FATHER STEPHEN LOPOSKY



SATURDAY MARCH 2, 2019

**Saints Peter and Paul Church
Rockaway, New Jersey**

12:00 P.M. to 5:00 P.M.

Registration Begins at 11:30 A.M.

REGISTER NOW AT WWW.ACROD.ORG
Childcare, Lunch and Snacks will be provided
and a Free-Will Offering will be accepted

For questions please call/email Father Matthew Stagon, pastor of Saints Peter and Paul
(973) 627-1462 or fatherstagon@yahoo.com

A Word From the Holy Fathers

David indicates that our Lord Jesus Christ has no genealogy with regard to His divinity (Ps 110.4), Isaiah says the same (Isa 53.8), and later so does the Apostle (Heb 7.3). How can the descent be traced of Him “who is in the beginning, and is with God, and is God, and is the Word and Son of God” (Jn 1.12, 18)? He does not have a Father who was before Him, and shares with His Father “a name which is above every other name” and all speech (Phil 2.9). For the most part, genealogies are traced back through different surnames but there is no surname for God, and whatever may be said of Father, Son and Holy Spirit, They are one and do not differ in any respect.

Impossible to recount is Christ’s descent according to His divinity, but His ancestry according to His human nature can be traced, since He who deigned to become Son of man in order to save mankind was the offspring of men. And it is this genealogy of His that two of the evangelists, Matthew and Luke, recorded. But although Matthew, in the passage from his Gospel read today, begins with those born first, he makes no mention of anyone before Abraham. He traces the line down from Abraham until he reaches Joseph to whom, by divine dispensation, the Virgin Mother of God was betrothed, being of the same tribe and homeland as him, that her own stock might be shown from this to be in no way inferior. Luke, by contrast, begins not with the earliest forebears but the most recent, and working his way back from Joseph the Betrothed, does not stop at Abraham, nor, having included Abraham’s predecessors, does he end with Adam, but lists God among Christ’s human forebears (Luke 3.2338); wishing to show, in my opinion, that from the beginning man was not just a creation of God, but also a son in the Spirit, which was given to him at the same time as his soul, through God’s quickening breath (Gen 2.7). It was granted to him as a pledge that, if, waiting patiently for it, he kept the commandment, he would be able to share through the same Spirit in a more perfect union with God, by which he would live for ever with Him and obtain immortality.

By heeding the evil counsel of the pernicious angel, man transgressed the divine commandments, was shown to be unworthy, forfeited the pledge and interrupted God’s plan. God’s grace, however, is unalterable and His purpose cannot prove false, so some of man’s offspring were chosen, that, from among many, a suitable receptacle for this divine adoption and grace might be found, who would serve God’s will perfectly, and would be revealed as a vessel worthy to unite divine and human nature in one person, not just exalting our nature, but restoring the human race. The holy Maid and Virgin Mother of God was this vessel, so she was proclaimed by the archangel Gabriel as full of grace, being the chosen one among

the chosen, blameless, undefiled and worthy to contain the person of the Godman and to collaborate with Him. Therefore God preordained her before all ages, chose her from among all who had ever lived, and deemed her worthy of more grace than anyone else, making her the holiest of saints, even before her mysterious childbearing. For that reason, He graciously willed that she should make her home in the Holy of Holies, and accepted her as His companion to share His dwelling from her childhood. He did not simply choose her from the masses, but from the elect of all time, who were admired and renowned for their piety and wisdom, and for their character, words and deeds, which pleased God and brought benefit to all.

Observe also that the Holy Spirit makes it clear to such as have understanding that the whole of divinely inspired Scripture was written because of the Virgin Mother of God. It relates in detail the entire line of her ancestry, which begins with Adam, then passes through Seth, Noah and Abraham, as well as David and Zerubbabel, those in between them and their successors, and goes up to the time of the Virgin Mother of God. By contrast, Scripture does not touch upon some races at all, and in the case of others, it makes a start at tracing their descent, then soon abandons them, leaving them in the depths of oblivion. Above all, it commemorates those of the Mother of God's forebears who, in their own lives and the deeds wrought by them, prefigured Christ, who was to be born of the Virgin.

Now these things are examples and types of greater mysteries, since it was necessary that the royal line be united in many ways with the priestly race, which would bring forth the family of Christ according to the flesh; because in many ways Christ is truly the eternal King and High Priest. And the fact that adopted sons are counted as sons, that the law approves of adoptive fathers no less and sometimes more than natural fathers, and that the same, appropriately, applies to other kinds of kinship, was a clear example and type of our adoption by Christ, our kinship with Him and our calling according to the Spirit and the law of grace. For the Lord Himself says in the Gospels, "Whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother" (Matt 12.50).

Do you see that the family and kin of Christ are not engendered according to nature, but according to grace and the law that comes from grace? This law is so far superior to the law given through Moses that, whereas those called sons according to the law of Moses are neither born of God nor do they transcend human nature, those styled sons by the law of grace are born of God, brought to perfection above nature and made sons of Abraham through Christ, more closely associated with him than sons according to blood. All who have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ, according to Paul (Gal 3.27), and although they are other people's children according to nature, they are born supernaturally of Christ, who in this way conquers nature. For as He became incarnate without seed of the Holy

Spirit and the ever-virgin Mary, so He grants potential and power to those who believe in His name to become children of God. For “as many as received him,” says the evangelist, “to them He gave power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God” (John 1.1213).

Why, when he says, “which were born of God,” does he not say “and became sons of God,” but “received power to become” sons? Because he was looking towards the end and the universal restoration, the perfection of the age to come. The same evangelist says in his epistles, “It doth not yet appear what we shall be: but when He shall appear, we shall be like Him” (1 John 3.2). Then shall we be children of God, seeing and experiencing God’s radiance, with the rays of Christ’s glory shining around us, and ourselves shining, as Moses and Elijah proved to us when they appeared with Him in glory on Mount Tabor (Matt 17.3, Luke 9.30). “The righteous,” it says, “shall shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father” (Matt 13.43). We receive power for this purpose now through the grace of divine baptism. Just as a newborn infant has received potential from his parents to become a man and heir to their house and fortune, but does not yet possess that inheritance because he is a minor, nor will he receive it if he dies before coming of age, so a person born again in the Spirit through Christian baptism has received power to become a son and heir of God, a joint-heir with Christ, and in the age to come he will, with all certainty, receive the divine and immortal adoption as a son, which will not be taken from him, unless he has forfeited this by spiritual death. Sin is spiritual death, and whereas physical death is annulled when the future age arrives, spiritual death is confirmed for those who bring it with them from here.

Everyone who has been baptized, if he is to obtain the eternal blessedness and salvation for which he hopes, should live free from all sin. Peter and Paul, the leaders of the highest company of the holy apostles, made this clear. Paul said of Christ, “In that He died, He died unto sin once: but in that He lives, He lives unto God,” adding, “likewise we also ought to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God” (Rom 6.1011), whereas Peter wrote, “Forasmuch then as Christ hath died for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind: that ye no longer should live the rest of your time by the lusts of men, but by the will of God” (1 Pet 4.12). If it was for our sake that the Lord lived His time on earth, to leave us an example, and He passed His life without sin, we too must live without sin, in imitation of Him. Since He said even to Abraham’s descendants according to the flesh, “If ye were Abraham’s children, ye would do the works of Abraham” (John 8.39), how much more will He say to us who have no physical kinship with Him, “If you were My children, you would do My works”? It is therefore consistent and just that anyone who, after divine baptism, after the covenants he made then to

God and the grace he received from it, does not follow Christ's way of life step by step, but transgresses and offends against the benefactor, should be utterly deprived of divine adoption and the eternal inheritance.

But, O Christ our King, who can worthily extol the greatness of Your love for mankind? What was unnecessary for Him and what He did not do, namely, repentance (for He never needed to repent, being sinless), He granted to us as a mediator for when we sin even after receiving grace. Repentance means returning once again to Him and to a life according to His will out of remorse. Even if someone commits a deadly sin, if he turns away from it with all his soul, abstains from it and turns back to the Lord in deed and truth, he should take courage and be of good hope, for he shall not lose eternal life and salvation. When a child according to the flesh meets his death, he is not brought back to life by his father, but someone born of Christ, even though he fall into deadly sins, if he turns again and runs to the Father who raises the dead, is made alive once more, obtains divine adoption, and is not cast out from the company of the just.

May we all attain to this, to the glory of Christ and of His Father without beginning and of the lifegiving Spirit, now and for ever, and unto unceasing ages. Amen.

– St. Gregory Palamas, *Homily 57*

Nativity Service Schedule

Tomorrow, we will serve the Royal Hours at 8:00 AM. We will celebrate the Nativity of Christ with a vigil and Divine Liturgy at 6:00 PM. Please observe at least a three hour fast if you plan to receive the Eucharist (though, it should be noted, traditionally no food is eaten on Christmas Eve until after the first star is seen in the sky). The usual weekday services will not be held this week; after celebrating the Nativity of Christ, the next service will be Matins on Sunday morning.

~Christ is born! Glorify Him!~

Follow Our Diocese On-Line

Diocesan Website: <http://www.acrod.org>

Camp Nazareth: <http://www.campnazareth.org>

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Twitter: <https://twitter.com/acrodnews>

You Tube: <https://youtube.com/acroddioce>

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.)