

SOBORNOST

St. Thomas the Apostle Orthodox Church

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American Carpatho-Russian Orthodox Diocese

*ECUMENICAL PATRIARCHATE
OF CONSTANTINOPLE*

SERVICES

**Wednesday in Great Lent: Liturgy of
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

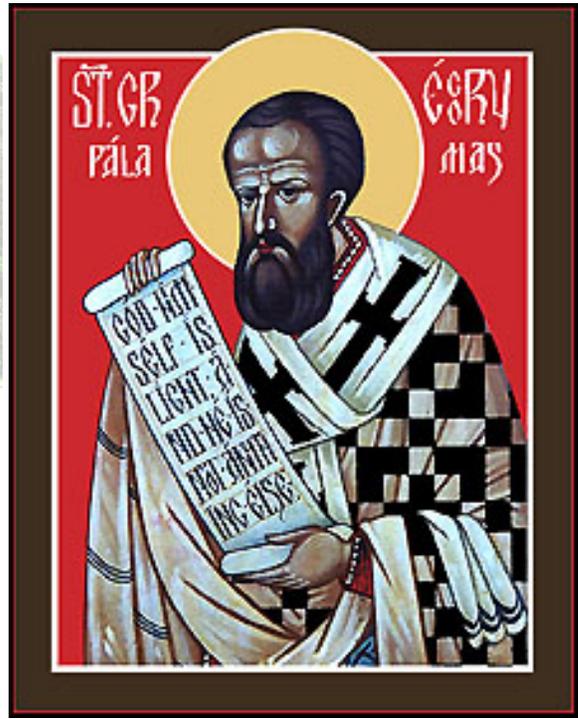
Children's Sunday School 9:30 AM | Divine Liturgy 10:00 AM.

March 15, 2020 | 2nd Sunday of Great Lent |

Gregory Palamas

In one of the Psalms we can read the following words: Those who have sown with tears will reap with joy... If in the course of weeks of preparation we have seen all that is ugly and unworthy in us mirrored in the parables, if we have stood before the judgement of our conscience and of our God, then we have truly sown in tears our own salvation. And yet, there is still time because even when we enter into the time of the harvest, God gives us a respite; as we progress towards the Kingdom of God, towards the Day of the Resurrection, we still can, at every moment, against the background of salvation, in the face of the victory of God, turn to Him with gratitude and yet, brokenheartedness, and say, 'No, Lord! I am perhaps the worker of the eleventh hour, but receive me as Thou promised to do!'

Last week we have kept the day of the Triumph of Orthodoxy, the day when the Church pro-claimed that it was legitimate and right to paint icons of Christ; it was not a declaration about art, it was a deeply theological proclamation of the Incarnation. The Old Testament said to us that God cannot be represented by any image because He was unbottomed mystery; He had even no Name except the mysterious name which only the High Priest know.



But in the New Testament we have learned, and we know from experience that God has become Man, that the fullness of the Godhead has abided and is still abiding forever in the flesh; and therefore God has a human name: Jesus, and He has got a human face that can be represented in icons. An icon is therefore a proclamation of our certainty that God has become man; and He has become man to achieve ultimate, tragic and glorious solidarity with us, to be one of us that we may be one of the children of God. He has become man that we may become gods, as the Scripture tells us. And so, we could last week already rejoice; and this is why, a week before, when we were already preparing to meet this miracle, this wonder of the Incarnation, softly, in an almost inaudible way, the Church was singing the canon of Easter: Christ is risen from the dead! - because it is not a promise for the future, it is a certainty of the present, open to us like a door for us to enter through Christ, the Door as He calls Himself, into eternity.

And today we remember the name of Saint Gregory Palamas, one of the great Saints of Orthodoxy, who against heresy and doubt, proclaimed, from within the experience of the ascetics and of all believers, proclaimed that the grace of God is not a created Gift - it is God Himself, communicating Himself to us so that we are pervaded by His presence, that we gradually, if we only receive Him, open ourselves to Him, become transparent or at least translucent to His light, that we become incipiently and ever increasingly partakers of the Divine nature.

This is not simply a promise; this is a certainty which we have because this has happened to thousands and thousands of those men and women whom we venerate as the Saints of God: they have become partakers of the Divine nature, they are to us a revelation and certainty of what we are called to be and become.

And today one step more brings us into the joy, the glory of Easter. In a week's time we will sing the Cross - the Cross which was a terror for the criminals, and has become now a sign of victory and salvation, because it is to us the sign that God's love has no measure, no limits, is as deep as God is deep, all-embracing as God is all-embracing, and indeed, as tragically victorious as God is both tragic and victorious, awe-inspiring, and shining the quiet, joyful light which we sing in Vespers.

Let us then make ourselves ready to meet this event, the vision of the Cross, look at it, and see in it the sign of the Divine love, a new certainty of our possible salvation; and when the choir sings this time more loudly the canon of the Resurrection, let us realize that step by step God leads us into a victory which He has won, and which He wants to share with us.

And then we will move on; we will listen to the Saint who teaches us how to receive the grace which God is offering, how to become worthy of Him; and a step

more - and we will see the victory of God in Saint Mary of Egypt and come to the threshold of Holy Week. But let us remember that we are now in the time of newness, a time when God's victory is been revealed to us, that we are called to be enfolded by it, to respond to it by gratitude, a gratitude that will make us into new people - and also with joy! And joy full of tears in response to the love of God, and a joy which is a responsible answer to the Divine love. Amen! – Met. Anthony (Bloom) of Sourozh

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

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

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

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

A Word From the Holy Fathers

Paul, while he conducted himself after the example of the Lord, exhorted us, saying, ‘Be followers of me, as I also am of Christ (1 Cor. 11:1).’ In this way he prevailed against all the divisions of the devil, writing, ‘I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Jesus Christ (Rom. 8:38, 39).’ For the enemy draws near to us in afflictions, and trials, and labors, using every endeavor to ruin us. But the man who is in Christ, combating those things that are contrary, and opposing wrath by long-suffering, insolent treatment by meekness, and vice by virtue, obtains the victory, and exclaims, ‘I can do all things through Christ Who strengthens me;’ and, ‘In all these things we are conquerors through Christ Who loved us (Phil. 4:13; Rom. 8:37).’ This is the grace of the Lord, and these are the Lord’s means of restoration for the children of men. For He suffered to prepare freedom from suffering for those who suffer in Him, He descended that He might raise us up, He took on Him the trial of being born, that we might love Him Who is unbegotten, He went down to corruption, that corruption might put on immortality, He became weak for us, that we might rise with power, He descended to death, that He might bestow on us immortality, and give life to the dead. Finally, He became man, that we who die as men might live again, and that death should no more reign over us; for the Apostolic word proclaims, ‘Death shall not have the dominion over us (Rom. 6:9, 14).’

What then is our duty, my brethren, for the sake of these things, but to praise and give thanks to God, the King of all? . . . Let us keep the feast in that way which He has dedicated for us unto salvation—the holy day Easter—so that we may celebrate the feast which is in heaven with the angels. Thus anciently, the people of the Jews, when they came out of affliction into a state of ease, kept the feast, staging a song of praise for their victory. So also the people in the time of Esther, because they were delivered from the edict of death, kept a feast to the Lord, reckoning it a feast, returning thanks to the Lord, and praising Him for having changed their condition. Therefore let us, performing our vows to the Lord, and confessing our sins, keep the feast to the Lord, in conversation, moral conduct, and manner of life; praising our Lord, Who has chastened us a little, but has not utterly failed nor forsaken us, nor altogether kept silence from us.

– St. Athanasius the Great, *Festal Letter 10* (338)



A MORNING PRAYER BY ST PATRICK

Lorica by St. Patrick (*Lorica was a mystical garment or breastplate that protected the wearer from danger and illness. The word was attributed to this prayer because of the sections in it regarding protection from physical and spiritual enemies.*)

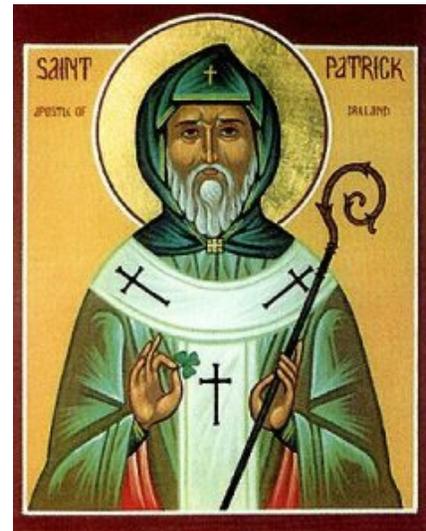
I arise today
Through a mighty strength, the invocation of the Trinity,
Through belief in the Threeness,
Through confession of the Oneness
of the Creator of creation.

I arise today
Through the strength of Christ's birth with His baptism,
Through the strength of His crucifixion with His burial,
Through the strength of His resurrection with His ascension,
Through the strength of His descent for the judgment of doom.

I arise today
Through the strength of the love of cherubim,
In the obedience of angels,
In the service of archangels,
In the hope of resurrection to meet with reward,
In the prayers of patriarchs,
In the predictions of prophets,
In the preaching of apostles,
In the faith of confessors,
In the innocence of holy virgins,
In the deeds of righteous men.

I arise today, through
The strength of heaven,
The light of the sun,
The radiance of the moon,
The splendor of fire,
The speed of lightning,
The swiftness of wind,
The depth of the sea,
The stability of the earth,
The firmness of rock.

I arise today, through
God's strength to pilot me,
God's might to uphold me,



God's wisdom to guide me,
God's eye to look before me,
God's ear to hear me,
God's word to speak for me,
God's hand to guard me,
God's shield to protect me,
God's host to save me
From snares of devils,
From temptation of vices,
From everyone who shall wish me ill,
afar and near.

I summon today
All these powers between me and those evils,
Against every cruel and merciless power
that may oppose my body and soul,
Against incantations of false prophets,
Against black laws of pagandom,
Against false laws of heretics,
Against craft of idolatry,
Against spells of witches and smiths and wizards,
Against every knowledge that corrupts man's body and soul;
Christ to shield me today
Against poison, against burning,
Against drowning, against wounding,
So that there may come to me an abundance of reward.

Christ with me,
Christ before me,
Christ behind me,
Christ in me,
Christ beneath me,
Christ above me,
Christ on my right,
Christ on my left,
Christ when I lie down,
Christ when I sit down,
Christ when I arise,
Christ in the heart of every man who thinks of me,
Christ in the mouth of everyone who speaks of me,
Christ in every eye that sees me,
Christ in every ear that hears me.



Office of the Metropolitan

312 Garfield Street

Johnstown, PA 15906

March 12, 2020

Protocol No. 7/2020

God is with us!

Dear Reverend Clergy and Faithful Laity of the Diocese,

I am writing to you today with a sense of urgency, as we confront the new Covid-19 (Coronavirus) pandemic that is potentially affecting not only our physical and spiritual health but also our way of life in the United States of America. If you have turned on the television, listened to the radio, or followed the announcements on your phones for the last three weeks or so, you would think that the world is coming to an end. Local public and private schools are shutting down for several weeks. Professional sports leagues are suspending their schedules. Colleges and universities are closing down their on campus activities and doing everything on-line for the remainder of the spring semester. Even the NCAA Men's and Women's Basketball March Madness Tournaments have been cancelled. What will we do for the next three weeks without our madness? How about going to Church and observing Great Lent in a more meaningful way.

Several Priests and lay people have contacted the Chancery and/or me personally asking for some guidance/directives on what to do as we deal with this current health issue. Some have even offered their own suggestions. Various Christian Churches, Roman Catholic and Protestants, have made pronouncements concerning the Coronavirus. Some of the Orthodox jurisdictions here in the United States and others around the world have made pronouncements encouraging their faithful.

Here are my thoughts and directives concerning this issue:

- 1) Anyone who is not feeling well should refrain from attending Church services until they are feeling better. Stay home. There is no need to put others at risk. This is to protect both the person who is ill and those who are not. Those at home can view Church services via the Internet on our Diocesan website (www.acrod.org) or say their prayers at the home's prayer corner.
- 2) Parishes should provide hand sanitizers in the Narthex of the Church for the faithful to use prior to entering the Nave of the Church. Hand washing (warm water and soap) is also critical.

The American Carpatho-Russian Orthodox Diocese of North America

ECUMENICAL PATRIARCHATE OF CONSTANTINOPLE

- 3) Venerating of icons and the hand cross is usually with a kiss. At this time it might be prudent to reduce or eliminate these activities. It is very difficult for me to tell a faithful individual who for many years has kissed these religious items to stop. It is a personal choice. If you wish to kiss an icon and/or the cross, go ahead. If you choose not to, just bow.
- 4) The Kiss of Peace which is observed in many of our Diocesan parishes should be avoided. Instead, at the appropriate time, parishioners should acknowledge each other with a bow.
- 5) Parishes should celebrate all Church services as usual. There is no need to cancel any of our opportunities to be with our God in His house. Worshipping Him. Thanking Him. Asking for His assistance in our time of need.
- 6) The Eucharist will be distributed as usual. Parishioners are reminded to approach the Chalice with their mouths wide open, in order to receive the Body and the Blood of our Lord, God and Saviour Jesus Christ. This gift from God is the medicine of our lives. Either we believe that indeed it is the Body and the Blood of Christ or we don't. In the Orthodox understanding it is and so the Eucharist cannot ever be a vector/method/way of illness or death.
- 7) Anointing with oil should be with individual cotton-tipped swaps or individual cotton balls.
- 8) Various items such as antidoron, flowers, palms, pussy willows, etc. should be distributed as usual. It might be helpful if the Priest quickly sanitizes his hands just prior to the distribution.
- 9) Following Church services a thorough cleaning and disinfecting should be performed on all exposed surfaces (for example door knobs, candles stands, liturgical items, etc.).

As we move forward additional directives may be announced if necessary, however as a minimum these are to be followed by all the parishes in our Diocese. Let us not allow ourselves to be overwhelmed by this current stress in our lives. Focus on Great Lent as we journey towards Pascha.

“But the Lord, He is the One who goes before you. He will be with you. He will not leave you nor forsake you: do not be afraid, nor be terrified.” (Deut. 31:8)

Working in His Vineyard with much love,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "+ Metropolitan Gregory".

+Metropolitan Gregory of Nyssa

This Protocol is to be placed in all weekly bulletins or copies made available to all parishioners. In addition, Priests should read it at the end of Church services on the first Sunday following its arrival.

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ECUMENICAL PATRIARCHATE OF CONSTANTINOPLE

Social Team for March 22

Please note that social is canceled while the parish assesses the ongoing threat of the coronavirus.

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, Dn. Steve Hall, 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 Domieniecki, 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, Bernie Takabayashi & family, Dawn & Faith Ulmschneider, Lydia Vita, Christine, Marshall, Nathaniel, Dcn. Nectarios and Ia, the Syrian Christians displaced by war, Mother Virginia Marie and the Carmelite Nuns of Port Tobacco, the newly departed servant of God John Blaydoe, and all those in need of our prayers. (Please advise Fr. Joseph of changes.)