

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

Public services are in abeyance pending resolution of the COVID-19 pandemic. Please refer to the information on our parish and diocesan websites on how you can worship at home.



May 17, 2020 | Sunday of the Samaritan Woman After-feast of Mid-Pentecost

When we stand in church or at home before the holy icons, make the sign of the cross, bow our heads or prostrate ourselves, say the words of prayer, make charitable contributions to the church, abstain from non-Lenten food, i.e. keep the fast, etc., – then we are externally serving and worshipping God. However, such worship is not yet the worship “in spirit and in truth” that was mentioned in today’s Gospel, it is not yet genuine prayer, but only its outward manifestation.

Today’s Gospel reading tells us of how Jesus Christ in His conversation with the Samaritan woman teaches us, too, how to pray and how to worship God. We have just celebrated the great feast of Christ’s Resurrection, the celebration of which continues until the end of the paschal period. And throughout this period of time, every Sunday the Church brings to our attention Gospel readings from St. John the Theologian, whose Gospel is distinguished from the others by its lofty spiritual style, and which most frequently deals with dogmatic teaching and speaks of Jesus Christ as the Son of God, as the Messiah.

The Holy Church, preparing us throughout the entire year for the feast of Pascha, now offers us supreme truths in these Gospel readings. Often in prayer our soul is

distracted by various earthly thoughts, even against our will. Often we ourselves do not know what we are saying, since our lips say one thing, while the heart deals with another. How can we expect God to hear our prayer when we ourselves often do not hear it? Rarely are we able to pray sincerely, sometimes not at all, and there is little benefit from automatic prayer. What should we do? Should we stop praying? No, dear brethren! The Lord answers us through the Samaritan woman.

The Lord met this woman at the well, and during His conversation with her He made her aware of her sinful life. This revelation set her on the path to salvation – she was the first among the Samaritans to acknowledge Christ as Messiah. Without even having had time to do any penance, she asks this Stranger about spiritual life, and He explains it to her. He does not reject her, though she is a sinner, but discourses with her on the same level as with His listeners in the synagogues. The Lord knows what is in everyone’s heart, He knew what was in the Samaritan woman’s heart, and He also knows our own hearts and our weaknesses. He knows us well and can help us, only we must not fall prey to despondency. Tradition holds it that the Samaritan woman, who was called Photinia, was persecuted during Nero’s reign in approximately 66 A.D. for spreading Christianity, and died a martyric death by being thrown into a well.

Despite leading a sinful life, the Samaritan Photinia had a sincere desire to know the true faith, and the Lord did not overlook her desire. In other words, she was not lukewarm in faith as is, unfortunately, the overwhelming majority of contemporary mankind. The Lord accepted the sinful Samaritan woman, but did not approve of the scribes and the Pharisees, despite the fact that outwardly their life may have appeared more righteous.

Thus external actions alone, without internal coordination, are of lesser value to us than making sure our inner spiritual state is better and purer. At this point we come upon the most important aspect of our life: **the inner life**.

Today’s Gospel reading teaches us to approach all spiritual issues in our life **from within**: to pay scant attention to externals, for the internal has more value than the external. And whenever we are faced with the question of whether we are acting correctly in such-and-such a case, we should look upon it **from within the heart**: if the answer is “yes” – then thanks be to God, and if the answer is “no” – then we must try to change ourselves.

Thus for a long time now, for almost two thousand years, the time has been ripe to worship the Father in spirit and in truth, for God seeks such worshippers; and may He grant that we be among them. Amen. (*from <http://tokandylaki.blogspot.com>*)
(Father Igor Hrebinka)

Today's Epistle Lesson – The Acts of the Apostles 11:19-26, 29-30

In those days, those who were scattered after the persecution that arose over Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word to no one but the Jews only. But some of them were men from Cyprus and Cyrene, who, when they had come to Antioch, spoke to the Hellenists, preaching the Lord Jesus. And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number believed and turned to the Lord. Then news of these things came to the ears of the church in Jerusalem, and they sent out Barnabas to go as far as Antioch. When he came and had seen the grace of God, he was glad, and encouraged them all that with purpose of heart they should continue with the Lord. For he was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith. And a great many people were added to the Lord. Then Barnabas departed for Tarsus to seek Saul. And when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. So it was that for a whole year they assembled with the church and taught a great many people. And the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch. Then the disciples, each according to his ability, determined to send relief to the brethren dwelling in Judea. This they also did, and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul.

Today's Gospel Lesson – Saint John 4:5-42

At that time, Jesus came to a city of Samaria which is called Sychar, near the plot of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph. Now Jacob's well was there. Jesus therefore, being wearied from *His* journey, sat thus by the well. It was about the sixth hour. A woman of Samaria came to draw water. Jesus said to her, "Give Me a drink." For His disciples had gone away into the city to buy food. Then the woman of Samaria said to Him, "How is it that You, being a Jew, ask a drink from me, a Samaritan woman?" For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans. Jesus answered and said to her, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who says to you, 'Give Me a drink,' you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water." The woman said to Him, "Sir, You have nothing to draw with, and the well is deep. Where then do You get that living water? Are You greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well, and drank from it himself, as well as his sons and his livestock?" Jesus answered and said to her, "Whoever drinks of this water will thirst again, but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life." The woman said to Him, "Sir, give me this water, that I may not thirst, nor come here to draw." Jesus said to her, "Go, call your husband, and come here." The woman answered and said, "I have no husband." Jesus said to her, "You have well said, 'I have no husband,' for you have had five husbands, and the one whom you now have is not your husband; in that you spoke truly." The woman said to Him, "Sir, I perceive that You are a

prophet. Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, and you *Jews* say that in Jerusalem is the place where one ought to worship.” Jesus said to her, “Woman, believe Me, the hour is coming when you will neither on this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, worship the Father. You worship what you do not know; we know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. God *is* Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.” The woman said to Him, “I know that Messiah is coming” (who is called Christ). “When He comes, He will tell us all things.” Jesus said to her, “I who speak to you am *He*.”

And at this *point* His disciples came, and they marveled that He talked with a woman; yet no one said, “What do You seek?” or, “Why are You talking with her?” The woman then left her waterpot, went her way into the city, and said to the men, “Come, see a Man who told me all things that I ever did. Could this be the Christ?” Then they went out of the city and came to Him. In the meantime His disciples urged Him, saying, “Rabbi, eat.” But He said to them, “I have food to eat of which you do not know.” Therefore the disciples said to one another, “Has anyone brought Him *anything* to eat?” Jesus said to them, “My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work. Do you not say, ‘There are still four months and *then* comes the harvest’? Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already white for harvest! And he who reaps receives wages, and gathers fruit for eternal life, that both he who sows and he who reaps may rejoice together. For in this the saying is true: ‘One sows and another reaps.’ I sent you to reap that for which you have not labored; others have labored, and you have entered into their labors.”

And many of the Samaritans of that city believed in Him because of the word of the woman who testified, “He told me all that I *ever* did.” So when the Samaritans had come to Him, they urged Him to stay with them; and He stayed there two days. And many more believed because of His own word. Then they said to the woman, “Now we believe, not because of what you said, for we ourselves have heard *Him* and we know that this is indeed the Christ, the Savior of the world.”

A Word From the Holy Fathers

In difficult times, when all my efforts have failed to conform the events of my life towards the Gospel teaching, I would pray in the following manner:

"Come and make Yourself one with my will. Your commandments do not fit within my narrow heart, and my finite *nous* does not comprehend their content. If You are not well pleased to come and dwell within me Yourself, then I will

inevitably be led towards the darkness. I know that You do not work through force, so I entreat You: Come and take charge of my house, and wholly renew me. Transform the hellish darkness of my pride into Your humble love. Transfigure with Your Light my corrupted nature, that no passion might be able to remain within me that would prevent Your coming with Your Father (John 14:21-23). Make me a dwelling place of that holy life which You Yourself have allowed me to taste of here in part...Yes, O Lord, I entreat You, do not deprive from me this sign of Your goodness.”

– St. Sophrony of Essex

A Nationwide Approach of the Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops of the USA for the Staged Reopening of Churches during the COVID-19 Pandemic

“Feed My Lambs”

To the Orthodox Christian Faithful of the United States of America:

Christ is Risen! Truly He is Risen!

In this time of global pandemic, the majority of the Faithful of our Churches have been withheld from receiving Holy Communion and attending Divine Services in order to safeguard their health and the health of others. We, [the Hierarchs of the Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops of the USA](#), are taking action to restore the possibility of Holy Eucharist to the “lambs” of Christ, in accordance with His word.

We are aware that the course of the disease is not certain by any means. The [structures that were put into place for Holy Week and the Holy Pascha](#), and which remain the common practice to this moment, may be necessary again in the future, depending on the best public health assessments and legal requirements. Nevertheless, we have heard the pained cry of the Faithful who, although faithful in their devotion, as witnessed by virtual participation in broadcast services and their continuing stewardship support of the Church, have felt an intense separation from Holy Eucharist and their Communities.

Therefore, in order to meet the spiritual nourishment of our Orthodox Christians in this time of the careful and considered re-opening of societal functions – with all the diverse legal restrictions among varying civil jurisdictions and with recommendations from public health experts – [we have developed a common toolkit](#) to facilitate the nourishing of the Faithful through the Most Pure Body and Most Precious Blood of our Risen God and Savior, our Lord Jesus Christ, and return to liturgical services.

The system takes into account the plentitude of differing realities in the various regions, jurisdictions, and demographics throughout the country. It considers the wide-ranging parish sizes, local policies, and climate conditions. It provides each bishop assistance in determining a way forward that, when applied properly and tailored for specific parishes, leads to the best practice for a given scenario. Thus, there will be instances where one parish might be able to open while conditions remain unsafe for another. For this reason, it is of utmost importance for faithful to attend only their “home” parish during this period of restoration and follow the directives of *their* presiding bishop. Attending a neighboring parish can elevate risk, shift the aforementioned considerations, and contribute to regression.

Finally, we acknowledge that this is a first step in a long journey, in which we rely on the Mercy of God. With faith in the Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, we pray that better days will soon be seen, and the resumption of the normative practices of the worshipping Church may return to their full exercise. It was the Lord Himself Who commanded the Apostles to feed the Five Thousand when He said: “You give them something to eat.” And it was the Disciples who distributed the blessed five loaves and two fishes to the assembled, after they were arranged in groupings by the Lord. We are following His example, asking that you also arrange yourselves to partake of the Holy Eucharist parish by parish, so that you also “may eat and all be filled” as were the Five Thousand.

Christ is Risen! Truly He is Risen!

[The Hierarchs of the Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops of the USA](#)

The Feast of Mid-Pentecost and the Pentecostarion

The fifty days following Pascha until the Feast of Pentecost are known as the period of the Pentecostarion in the Orthodox Church. At the mid-point between these great feasts of Pascha and Pentecost, on the twenty-fifth day which is always a Wednesday, is one of the most beloved feasts for the most devout Orthodox Christians known quit simply as Mid-Pentecost. Mid-Pentecost is to the Pentecostarion what the Third Sunday of Great Lent which honors the Holy Cross is to the period of Great Lent. It is a day which helps us focus on the central theme of the entire period. Whereas the mid-point of Great Lent reminds us to bear up the Cross of Christ bravely so that we may daily die with Christ in order to experience the Resurrection of our Lord, so also the mid-point of the Pentecostarion enlightens us regarding the theme of the fifty days following Pascha - which is the acquisition of the Holy Spirit poured out as a gift upon all the faithful who partake of the living water which is Christ Himself.

The central theme woven throughout the period of the Pentecostarion therefore is water. This becomes the central theme of the period because it is the central theme

of the Gospel of John which we read in its entirety during the Pentecostarion and which naturally flows into the Acts of the Apostles which is also read during this period in its entirety. This theme appears for the first time on Pascha itself in the joyous Canon of the Feast of Feasts written by Saint John the Damascene when he invites us to "drink a new drink," not "brought forth from a barren rock," as in the Old Testament under Moses, but which rather "springs forth from the tomb of Christ." Then during the Paschal Divine Liturgy the priest processes with the Gospel and chants loudly from Psalm 67:27 saying: "In the congregations bless God, the Lord from the well-springs of Israel."

When Renewal or Bright Week is over the Church wisely sets up two Sundays in which to abolish all doubts concerning the Resurrection of Christ, that of the Sunday of Saint Thomas and the Sunday of the Myrrh-bearing Women. This is done in order to ensure that we all partake of the living water that only the risen Lord can give. The following three Sundays, as we approach Pentecost, the theme of water becomes more and more central in the hymns of the Church. Thus we are found one Sunday at the Sheep's Pool with the Paralytic, then at the Well of Jacob with the Samaritan Woman, and finally at the Pool of Siloam with the Blind Man. During this festive period we hear concerning the "living water" which if one partakes of "he will never thirst". We are taught that it is our Savior Himself who is this living water, and we partake of Him through the baptismal waters and the Cup of Life which issued forth from His side at His crucifixion unto remission of sins and life everlasting. Then on Pentecost we have grace rained upon our parched souls and bodies so that we may be fruitful and have a great harvest as we hear from the holy Gospel on that day: "If any man thirst, let him come unto Me and drink". Finally the Pentecostarion concludes with the Feast of All Saints, that is those who partook of the "waters of piety", which is the harvest of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

The Fathers teach us that the feast of Mid-Pentecost stands in the middle of the fifty-day period from Pascha to Pentecost as a mighty flowing river of divine grace which have these two great feasts as its source. Pascha and Pentecost are united in Mid-Pentecost. Without Pascha there is no Pentecost and without Pentecost there is no purpose to Pascha.

We read the following entry in The Great Horologion that further explains the details of the feast:

"After the Savior had miraculously healed the paralytic, the Jews, especially the Pharisees and Scribes, were moved to envy and persecuted Him, and sought to slay Him, using the excuse that He did not keep the Sabbath, since He worked miracles on that day. Jesus then departed to Galilee. About the middle of the Feast of Tabernacles, He went up again to the Temple and

taught. The Jews, marveling at the wisdom of His words, said, 'how does this man know letters, having never learned?' But Christ first reproached their unbelief and lawlessness, then proved to them by the Law that they sought to slay Him unjustly, supposedly as a despiser of the Law, since He had healed the paralytic on the Sabbath.

"Therefore, since the things spoken of by Christ in the middle of the Feast of the Tabernacles are related to the Sunday of the Paralytic that is just passed, and since we have already reached the midpoint of the fifty days between Pascha and Pentecost, the Church has appointed this present feast as a bond between the two great Feasts, thereby uniting, as it were, the two into one, and partaking of the grace of them both. Therefore today's feast is called Mid-Pentecost, and the Gospel Reading, 'At Mid-feast'—though it refers to the Feast of the Tabernacles—is used.

"It should be noted that there were three great Jewish feasts: the Passover, the Pentecost, and the Feast of Tabernacles. Passover was celebrated on the 15th of Nissan, the first month of the Jewish calendar, which roughly coincides with our March. This feast commemorated that day on which the Hebrews were commanded to eat the lamb in the evening and anoint the doors of its houses with its blood. Then, having escaped bondage and death at the hands of the Egyptians, they passed through the Red Sea to come to the Promised Land. It is called 'the feast of Unleavened Bread,' because they ate unleavened bread for seven days. Pentecost was celebrated fifty days after Passover, first of all, because the Hebrew tribes had reached Mount Sinai after leaving Egypt, and there received the Law from God; secondly, it was celebrated to commemorate their entry into the Promised Land, where also they ate bread, after having been fed with manna forty years in the desert. Therefore, on this day they offered to God a sacrifice of bread prepared with new wheat. Finally, they also celebrated the Feast of Tabernacles from the 15th to the 22nd of 'the seventh month,' which corresponds roughly to our September. During this time, they lived in booths made of branches in commemoration of the forty years they spent in the desert, living in tabernacles, that is, in tents (Ex. 12:10-20; Lev. 23 LXX). "

The Feast of Mid-Pentecost is celebrated for an entire week until the following Wednesday, making it an eight day feast. During this entire time the hymns of Mid-Pentecost are joined with that of Pascha. Because of the theme of water, traditionally the Church celebrates the Lesser Blessing of the Waters on this day, preferably with a procession with the Holy Cross to a water spring.

The theme of the feast not only invokes water, but even more central to the Gospel chronology it honors Christ as Teacher and Wisdom as He reveals Himself between the stories of the Paralytic and that of the Blind Man. During this time we are told: "Now about the middle of the feast Jesus went up into the temple, and taught...Jesus answered them, and said, 'My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me. If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself'" (John 7:14-30). The icon for this feast depicts the young Jesus teaching the elders in the Temple (Luke 2:46, 47) at which time Jesus first revealed Himself as a teacher or rabbi. Traditional Orthodox icons will depict Jesus as larger than the elders, showing his superior spiritual status.

Since the hymns of the Church invoke and praise our Lord as the Wisdom of God spoken of in the Book of Proverbs, it is traditional that all churches named after Holy Wisdom or Hagia Sophia celebrate their feast on this day. In fact, Greek scholar Constantine Kalokyre has written a study titled "The Churches of the Wisdom of God and the Date of their Celebration", which appeared in the periodical Saint Gregory Palamas, no. 71 (723) (1988), pp. 538-617. In this study he comes to the conclusion that the Great Church of Hagia Sophia in Constantinople celebrated its feast day on Mid-Pentecost. *(from pravoslavie.ru)*

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, Howl Family, 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, Robinson Family, Samson Family, Sharon Sheptak, Bernie Takabayashi & family, Dawn & Faith Ulmschneider, 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 reposed handmaiden of God Lydia Vita, and all those in need of our prayers. (Please advise Fr. Joseph of changes.)