

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

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

January 26, 2020 – 32nd Sunday After Pentecost

Venerable Xenophon & Family of Constantinople

Ven. Xenophon, notable Constantinopolitan grandee, was known for his pious life. His wife Maria imitated her husband. Both were simple in soul and good in heart: wealth and fame did not raise vanity and pride in their souls. Wishing to give their two sons, John and Arcadius, fuller formation, their parents sent them to Phoenician Beirut. By divine Providence the ship that both brothers were on was wrecked. The waves tossed the brothers to different places on the coast. With one grieving about the destiny of the other, the separated brothers dedicated themselves to God and entered into monasticism. Their parents, having met them after some years in Jerusalem and struck by their unusual fate, also accepted monasticism. All of them pleased God and were honored with eternal glory. They died peacefully in the Fifth Century.

Saints Xenophon, Maria, John and Arcadius as Models for our Lives

In the chorus of saints we find not only those who lived in virginity in Christ, but also many who were married and even entire families. One of these is the family of Saint Xenophon. This holy man lived in the sixth century. He was of aristocratic descent with many material goods, but these didn't prevent him from living the spiritual life. With charity and love he saved them in the bank of heaven



and acquired spiritual wealth. Together with his most pious wife Maria they raised their children, John and Arcadius, with the living teachings of the evangelical life. When the right time came, the two children, with the blessing of their parents went to Beirut to study law. Along the way their ship wrecked and many drowned. The two brothers were saved, by divine providence, and were eventually found in Jerusalem. There, without knowing what happened to each other, they met at the same monastery where they took up their habitation. When the parents learned about the shipwreck they began, as is natural, to look for them. With the joy of their meeting they took up the great decision of distributing their wealth to the poor and dressing up in the monastic schema. They lived the Orthodox evangelical life with zeal and obedience and all four were made worthy of communion with God. The "chorus of the saints" increased by four members and Orthodox families acquired another model and intercessors before God. In the list of saints of the Orthodox Church we find several such families, and many sanctified couples.

The life and deeds of the four members of this holy family give us the opportunity to make some comments and emphasize three points: First, that our children are a gift from God. This is how parents should see them, and not as something that belongs to them, as their property with whom they could do whatever they want. They do not belong to us, but to our Creator. We are managers of His gifts. This truth, that God gives us our children, is clearly seen in Holy Scripture, and in everyday life. How many healthy couples are unable to have children, despite the fact that they have absolutely no health problems, and how many others have children despite the fact that it was humanly impossible and doctors ruled it out. The Divine Chrysostom stresses this fact in a characteristic way: "To bear children comes from on high by divine providence, and it is neither in the nature of a woman nor in the copulation of a man or anything else that is self-sufficient towards this" (Homily on Hannah, 1). God creates and parents become co-workers with God in the work of creation. Therefore, we should love them as gifts from God without wanting to impose our will on them in a violent way. Human freedom, this high gift from God, should not be violated in the name of love. Besides, true love respects and preserves human freedom. Children can understand when we show them true love and when, in its name, we are expressing our passions and frustrations.

Second, marriage is not an obstacle to salvation. There are married saints, as well as monks who are unworthy of their mission, and of course the opposite. And within the family one can live the commandments of Christ and reach sanctification and theosis. According to patristic teaching, marriage is the father of saints. It is enough for the members of a family to be in line with the life of the Church. Children within the realm of the Church learn to communicate with God,

as well as other people, and thus they gain social skills. They become social elements and this is very important, since we all know how much society suffers from antisocial individuals. They acquire a correct orientation and true wisdom and education, since from a young age they are learning the sacred writings "that give the wisdom of salvation".

Third, the purpose of human life is not marriage, but theosis. Many say that the purpose of their life is marriage. While there are others who argue that in order to be saved one must become a monastic. According to Orthodox theology, both of these are incorrect. God blessed marriage and the increase of the human race in the way we are familiar, because He foreknew the fall of man into sin. Otherwise the propagation of the human race would have taken place another way. But even monasticism is a means and not a purpose of life. The encounter with God can be achieved by both methods, as long as one lives in an Orthodox manner, is obedient to the Church and struggles to live the true repentance which leads to healing, namely the purification of the heart from the passions, the illumination of the nous and theosis. The Gospel of Christ is for all people. The experience within the Church, with Orthodox guidance, leads to communion with God. This is the acquisition of the Holy Spirit that unifies existence, pacifies and rejoices the heart, and leads to salvation. – Protopresbyter Fr. George Papavarnavas (*from Bulgakov Handbook and johnsanidopoulos.com*)

Today's Epistle Lesson – St. Paul's First Letter to Timothy 1:15-17

My son Timothy, this *is* a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief. However, for this reason I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show all longsuffering, as a pattern to those who are going to believe on Him for everlasting life. Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, to God who alone is wise, *be* honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.

Today's Gospel Lesson – Saint Matthew 15:21-28

At that time, Jesus departed to the region of Tyre and Sidon. And behold, a woman of Canaan came from that region and cried out to Him, saying, "Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David! My daughter is severely demon-possessed." But He answered her not a word. And His disciples came and urged Him, saying, "Send her away, for she cries out after us." But He answered and said, "I was not sent except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." Then she came and worshiped Him, saying, "Lord, help me!" But He answered and said, "It is not good to take the children's bread and throw *it* to the little dogs." And she said, "Yes, Lord, yet even the little dogs eat the crumbs which fall from their masters' table." Then Jesus answered and said to her, "O woman, great *is* your faith! Let it be to you as you desire." And her daughter was healed from that very hour.

A Word From the Holy Fathers

The one great and indispensable requirement for unanimity and concord is this, the imitation of God and of things divine. It is to these alone that the soul, created in God's image, must steadfastly gaze in order that, by gravitating toward them and becoming as much like them as possible, it may preserve to the greatest extent its noble status; and second, let us heed the divine voice and look up to the heaven above and the earth below and gain an understanding of the laws of creation, to wit, that heaven and earth and sea and this whole cosmos, the great and celebrated sign of God, by which God is heralded in silent proclamation, so long as it enjoys tranquility and is at peace within itself and stays within the confines of its own nature and nothing contends against anything else or oversteps the bonds of good will, bonds with which Logos the artificer has bound together the whole, is both a cosmos, just as it is called, and an unmatched object of beauty, and one could never imagine anything more splendid or majestic than it; but the very moment it ceases to be at peace, it ceases to be a cosmos as well. Or do you think that the sky, when in its good order it imparts a portion of its light to the air and its rains to the earth, is not guided by the law of good will, and that the earth and air, in making their respective gifts of food and breath, hence maintaining life in all living things, are not faithful imitations of parental love?

And the seasons gently and gradually merging and succeeding one another and easing the harshness of their extremes by the interval between them: does it not seem that it is peace that fitly gives them their direction with a view at the same time both to pleasure and to utility? And what of day and night and their respective circuits, equally measured and distributed between them, the one rousing us for work, and the other giving us rest? What of sun and moon and the beautiful throng of stars rising and setting in order? And do not sea and land, placidly overlapping and through a gracious process of giving and receiving in turn, lovingly nurture man by supplying him with their fruits in lavish abundance? What of the rivers that stream through mountains and plains and do not overflow their banks without good reason or alter their course to flood the earth? And the compounds and mixtures of elements, and the proportions and compatibility of the parts of the body? And the animals with their sustenance and propagation and assigned habitats? And the fact that some things command and others are commanded and that some are subject to us and others are free? All these things being so and guided and directed in accordance with the first causes of harmony, or rather of conflux and conspiracy, what else could they ever be seen to be but proclamations of life and concord, teaching mankind unanimity through their example?

– St. Gregory the Theologian, *Oration 6*



NATIVITY OF OUR LORD ORTHODOX CHURCH

MEN'S RETREAT

Hosted by the Society of St. Maximus

LEADING YOUR FAMILY THROUGH LENT

Saturday February 29th

Speakers for the Event:

Father Daniel Vaskalis • Father Joseph Birthisel • Father Patrick Viscuso

Tentative Schedule:

12:30pm - 1:15pm.....Light Refreshments
1:15pm - 4:00pm.....Retreat Topics presented by our Guest Speakers
4:00pm - 4:40pm.....Open Q&A Panel with our Guest Speakers

We will finish with celebrating Vespers

The Men's Retreat is open to adult men in the Parish. A \$5 donation is suggested for attendance.
To register, please email Subdeacon Seamus at ruairi.murray@gmail.com

Also Commemorated Today: New Martyrs & Confessors of Russia

The New Martyrs and Confessors of Russia are group of saints of the Russian Orthodox Church martyred or persecuted for Christ after the October Revolution of 1917 under the Bolsheviks. Shortly after the October Revolution a Local Synod on 5 (18) April 1918 passed a resolution: "We have set throughout Russia an annual memorial on the Sunday following the 25th of January as a day of all confessors and martyrs who died in the current fierce years of persecution." The Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia glorified the New Martyrs and Confessors of Russia in 1981. A prelude to the glorification of the New Martyrs and Confessors of Russia affected by years of revolutionary turmoil and the Bolshevik terror, was the canonization of Patriarch Tikhon on October 9, 1989. In June 1990 during a Local Synod Archbishop Herman (Timofeev) of Berlin was the first bishop who openly declared: "We must not deny the countless martyrs for the faith, we must not forget them." On March 25, 1991, the Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church adopted the definition: "On the resumption of remembrance of the confessors and martyrs who suffered for their faith in Christ, established by the Local Synod on 5 (18) April 1918."

Immediately following the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Russian Church under the leadership of Patriarch Alexis II began glorifying some of the New Martyrs, beginning with the Grand Duchess Elizabeth Fyodorovna, Metropolitan Vladimir of Kiev, and Metropolitan Benjamin of Petrograd, in 1992. In the 1990s there was a preparation for the canonization of the New Martyrs and Confessors of the Russian Church, and many saints were glorified as local saints. In 2000, the All-Russian Synod glorified Tsar Nicholas II and his family, as well as many other New Martyrs. More names continue to be added to the list of New Martyrs, after the Synodal Canonization Commission completed its investigation of each case. The Russian Church celebrates the feast of the New Martyrs and Confessors of Russia on the Sunday after January 25 (o.s.)/February 7 (n.s.) -- the date of Metropolitan Vladimir of Kiev's martyrdom (the first Hieromartyr of the Bolshevik Yoke).

By Metropolitan Hilarion Alfayev

We commemorate today the Assembly of Russia's New Martyrs and Confessors – all those who martyred in the years of severe persecutions against the faith and the Church of Christ. It is a great occasion for the whole Church as we remember tragic events but at the same time celebrate because the era which continued in our country for 70 years in the 20th century also revealed to the world a great assembly of confessors and new martyrs. They preferred dying to renouncing Christ and today they pray for us and our Motherland in the triumphant heavenly Church. The

persecution started immediately after the 1917 October Revolution when the Bolsheviki took over. The persecution against the faithful was purposeful and long and excelled in cruelty all the previous persecutions against the Church including those by Roman emperors in the 1st, 2nd and 3rd centuries. The theomachist regime did everything to destroy religion and the Church, her people and those who bore the grace-giving spirit of Christ that used to nourish our Motherland for centuries.

It was a brutal and bloody repression because the authorities sought to fully exterminate the Church. They proceeded from the utterly fantastic and antihuman idea that religion was a vestige of the past and should die out on its own, but if it did not die on its own it should be helped to die as soon as possible. The Bolsheviki created an antihuman and criminal ideology to guide the rulers of our country for decades. This ideology led to millions of victims, the people of different beliefs and social status. They began with the class struggle against nobility and merchants followed by the dispossession of well-to-do peasants, then resettlement and destruction of whole ethnic communities. One destruction campaign followed the other and these criminal actions continued for several decades. The Russian Orthodox Church was only one of the targets of that suicidal campaign waged by the authorities against their own people. But it was the Church who showed great courage and spiritual heroism, which has been imprinted in people's memory and glorified by the Church today by canonizing Russia's holy new martyrs and confessors.

The machine of persecution swallowed not only innocent people but also those who themselves were guilty of the crimes. Indeed, persecutors are known to become persecuted sometimes. We do not see any heroism in the actions of these people in the awareness that they were victimized by the world they themselves created. Those whom we glorify were not guilty of anything except for their faith in Christ, their service of the Church, their love of God and their efforts to guide the people of God to salvation. The people we glorify as Russia's new martyrs and confessors are not all the victims of those terrible years but those who remained faithful to the Lord to the end, who were not broken by the machine of repression, who did not renounce Christ even under torture and in prison, who did not betray their loved ones, as was often the case. We do not know how many they were, tens of thousands, hundreds of thousands or millions, because the whole truth about those years will never be revealed. All the archives will never be opened so that the records could reveal who remained faithful to the end and who stumbled. Besides, there are many forgeries in the transcripts of interrogation we use to restore the story of a particular new martyr. Some recorded as renouncers did not actually renounce their faith. The full story of the feat performed by the saints is known to

the Lord alone. But the Church has glorified all the new martyrs and confessors, those we know, those whose feat is documented and those who are known only to God. Among them were bishops and ordinary priests and monastics. There were also a great many lay people who did not renounce Christ even under torture.

The feat performed by the holy new martyrs and confessors is a spiritual treasure to be carefully preserved and revered by our Church. We do not know what times await us ahead. It is wrong to believe that the Church will now and forever enjoy welfare, peace and the good will of the powers that be, because times may change as it happens in history. Our Orthodox Church lived in very different situations and there always were those who were ready to follow to the end the path of Golgotha together with Christ. We pray today that the grace of God may never abandon our people, as it happened after a great many of them rejected the faith, Christ and the Church. We pray that this rejection may never be repeated in our history. We pray that we may hand down to our posterity the Orthodox faith we have inherited at such a dear price. *(from johnsanidopoulos.com)*

Treasurer's Report

Glory to God! The new treasurer has certainly taken his time getting up to speed. This is a quarterly report, October through December, after which we will go back to monthly. For the quarter we had an operating income of \$44,116. Our expenses were \$55,591.36, but that included completing a major milestone by paying off the remaining \$13,000.16 of our Diocesan mission loan. We will be applying that monthly payment to our main loan to pay that off even faster. Other major expenses included our Diocesan Assessment (\$4000), candle restock, a major renovation of our parking and exterior building lighting (\$6100, but we will be getting a large rebate from SMECO because we replaced incandescent lights with LEDs), and our church insurance policy premium payment (\$3266). In addition to our monthly \$100 support of an Orthodox missionary in Guatemala, Jesse Brandow, we paid out \$1998.59 in charitable causes. Thank you for your patience and your generous support of St. Thomas Church! In Christ, Herman, Treasurer.

House Blessings

Fr. Joseph blessed holy water for Theophany. Please contact him if you'd like to schedule a house blessing.

House Blessings

On the Feast of the **Meeting of the Lord in the Temple** (Feb. 2), it is customary to bless candles. Thus this Feast is sometimes known as Candlemas. Fr. John McGuckin writes: *"When Christians pray, from time immemorial they have lit candles. The candle is a sign of the fire of the Holy Spirit. Their cheerful radiance (especially if at the time of prayer one dims the lights a little) becomes a little*

sacrament of the resurrection grace of Christ. The flame also serves to remind us of how pure and heartfelt our prayer is meant to be, even if, at times, we are praying in a doldrum and may hardly feel any grace at all. The candle reminds us that Christ and his Holy Spirit pray in and through us, unfailingly. They see the heart's intent and always draw close in time of prayer. Their prayer (in us, through us, over us) is never dim, always luminous.” (Prayer Book of the Early Christians, Kindle Loc. 97-102)

Fr. Joseph will bless candles **next Sunday** at the close of Liturgy; bring some if you'd like to have them blessed.



February Anniversaries and Birthdays

Anniversaries:

Stefan & Jennifer Popescu 20th

Birthdays:

Benjamin Dewey 3rd

Lauren Chadwick 11th

Walter Howl 19th

Doug Chadwick 3rd

William Howl V 17th

Clara Vallandingham 24th

John Edgington 28th

Bernard Vallandingham 5th

Caleb Karbowsky 19th

Rachael David 27th



Social Team for February 2

Team 4 is up next week – Hebert, Howl, Karbowsky, Kopan. . Thank you!

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

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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, Alexander Shostko, 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, and all those in need of our prayers. (Please advise Fr. Joseph of changes.)