

# 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: Great Vespers 5:00 PM**

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

**Divine Liturgy 10:00 AM**

**\*Please note that attendance is currently limited by restrictions dictated by local response to the**

**COVID-19 pandemic; if you are currently not assigned to an attendance group, please contact [outreach@apostlethomas.org](mailto:outreach@apostlethomas.org) for information on when you may attend.**

## August 2, 2020 | 8<sup>th</sup> Sunday After Pentecost | Translation of the Relics of Deacon and Protomartyr Stephen

After the First Martyr Stephen had been stoned to death (see Dec. 27), Gamaliel, his teacher, encouraged certain of the Christians to go by night and take up the Saint's body and bury it in his field, which was at a distance of some twenty miles from Jerusalem and was called by his name, "Caphargamala", that is, "the field of Gamala," where Gamaliel himself was later buried.

In the year 415, a certain venerable priest named Lucian was sleeping in his bed, in the baptistery of a church which stood on the field of Gamaliel, where he commonly lay, in order to guard the sacred vessels of the church. Being half awake, he saw a tall comely old man of a venerable aspect, with a long white beard, clothed in a white garment, edged with small plates of gold, marked with crosses, and holding a golden wand in his hand. This person approached Lucian, and calling him thrice by his name, bid him go to Jerusalem, and tell Patriarch John



to come and open the tombs in which his remains, and those of certain other servants of Christ lay, that through their means God might open to many the gates of his mercy. Lucian asked his name? "I am," said he, "Gamaliel, who instructed Paul the apostle in the law; and on the east side of the monument lies Stephen who was stoned by the Jews outside the north gate. His body was left there exposed one day and one night; but was not touched by birds or beasts. I exhorted the faithful to carry it off in the night-time, which when they had done, I caused it to be carried secretly to my house in the country, where I celebrated his funeral rites forty days, and then caused his body to be laid in my own tomb to the east. Nikodemos, who came to Jesus by night, lies there in another coffin. He was excommunicated by the Jews for following Christ, and banished out of Jerusalem. Whereupon I received him into my house in the country, and there maintained him to the end of his life; after his death I buried him honorably near Stephen. I likewise buried there my son Abibas, who died before me at the age of twenty years. His body is in the third coffin which stands higher up, where I myself was also interred after my death. My wife Ethna, and my eldest son Semelias, who were not willing to embrace the faith of Christ, were buried in another ground, called Capharsemalia."

Lucian, fearing to pass for an impostor if he was too credulous, prayed, that if the vision was from God, he might be favored with it a second and a third time; and he continued to fast on bread and water. On the Friday following Gamaliel appeared again to him in the same form as before, and commanded him to obey. As emblems of the relics he brought and showed Lucian four baskets, three of gold and one of silver. The golden baskets were full of roses; two of white and one of red roses; the silver basket was full of saffron of a most delicious smell. Lucian asked what these were? Gamaliel said: "They are our relics. The red roses represent Stephen, who lies at the entrance of the sepulchre; the second basket Nikodemos, who is near the door; the silver basket represents my son Abibas, who departed this life without stain; his basket is contiguous to mine." Having said this he disappeared. Lucian then awoke, gave thanks to God, and continued his fasts.

In the third week, on the same day, and at the same hour, Gamaliel appeared again to him, and with threats upbraided him with his neglect, adding, that the drought which then afflicted the world, would be removed only by his obedience, and the discovery of their relics. Lucian being now terrified, promised he would no longer defer it.

After this last vision, Lucian went to Jerusalem, and laid the whole affair before Patriarch John, who wept for joy, and bid him go and search for the relics, which the patriarch concluded would be found under a heap of small stones, which lay in a field near his church. Lucian said he imagined the same thing, and returning to his field, summoned the inhabitants to meet the next day in the morning, in order to

search under the heap of stones. As Lucian was going the following morning to see the place dug up, he was met by Migeetus, a monk of a pure and holy life, who told him that Gamaliel had appeared to him, and bade him inform Lucian that they labored in vain in that place. "We were laid there," said he, "at the time of our funeral obsequies, according to the ancient custom; and that heap of stones was a mark of the mourning of our friends. Search elsewhere, in a place called Debatalia. In effect," said Migeetus, continuing in relating his vision, "I found myself suddenly in the same field, where I saw a neglected ruinous tomb, and in it three beds adorned with gold; in one of them more elevated than the others, lay two men, an old man and a young one, and one in each of the other beds." Lucian having heard Migeetus's report, praised God for having another witness of his revelation, and having removed to no purpose the heap of stones, went to the other place.

In digging up the earth here three coffins or chests were found, as above mentioned, whereon were engraved these words in very large characters: Cheliel, Nasuam, Gamaliel, Abibas. The two first are the Syriac names of Stephen, or "crowned", and Nikodemos, or "victory of the people". Lucian immediately sent the news to Patriarch John. He was then at the Synod of Diospolis, and taking along with him Eutonius, bishop of Sebaste, and Eleutherius, bishop of Jericho, came to the place. Upon the opening of Saint Stephen's coffin there was an earthquake, and there came out of the coffin such a fragrance, that no one remembered to have ever smelt any thing like it. And from the heavens they heard angelic voices, which could be heard for a great distance, saying: "Glory to God in the Highest, and on earth peace, to men of good pleasure." There was a vast multitude of people assembled in that place, among whom were many persons afflicted with diverse distempers; of whom seventy-three recovered their health upon the spot. Some were freed from evil spirits, others cured of scrophulous tumors of various kinds, others of fevers, fistulas, the bloody flux, the falling sickness, headaches, and pains in the bowels. They kissed the holy relics, and then shut them up.

The patriarch claimed those of Saint Stephen for the Church of Jerusalem, of which he had been deacon; the rest were left at Caphargamala. The Protomartyr's body was reduced to dust, excepting the bones, which were whole, and in their natural situation. The patriarch consented to leave a small portion of them at Caphargamala; the rest were carried in the coffin with singing of psalms and hymns to the Church of Zion at Jerusalem. At the time of this translation there fell a great deal of rain, which refreshed the country after a long drought. The translation was performed on the 26th of December, on which day the Church ever since honors the memory of Saint Stephen (the feast of St. Stephen was transferred

from December 26 to December 27 in the Orthodox Church, to make room for the Synaxis of the Theotokos on December 26).

The history of this miraculous discovery and translation was written by Lucian himself, and translated into Latin by Avitus, a Spanish priest, (then living at Jerusalem, an intimate friend of St. Jerome) and was published by the Benedictine monks in the appendix to the seventh tome of the works of St. Austin. This account is also attested by Chrysippus, an eminent and holy priest of the Church of Jerusalem (whose virtue is highly commended by the judicious author of the life of St. Euthymius); by Idatius and Marcellinus in their chronicles; by Bishop Basil of Seleucia, St. Austin, Bede, etc. It is mentioned by most of the historians, and in the sermons of the principal fathers of that age.

Saint Stephen's body remained in the Church of Zion till the empress Eudocia, wife of Theodosius the Younger, went to Jerusalem in 439, built a stately church to God in his honor, about a furlong from the city, near the spot where he was stoned to death, into which she procured a portion of the body to be translated, and in which she was buried herself after her death, in 461. We also are informed that Eudocia had brought a portion of the relic of Saint Stephen to Constantinople in 439, which were venerated in the Church of Saint Lawrence, built by Eudocia, and he was celebrated there with Saints Laurence and Agnes on September 21st.

Another tradition says that before Eudocia built her church, after the relic of Saint Stephen was placed in the Church of Holy Zion, a church dedicated to Saint Stephen was built in Jerusalem by a certain senator from Constantinople named Alexander, who with the blessing of Patriarch John was able to procure the body of Saint Stephen and have it translated to this church. Five years later Alexander became ill and died. He had made arrangements for his body to be placed in a chest made of persea wood, exactly like that which contained the relic of Saint Stephen. Eight years later, the widow of the above mentioned Alexander, whose name was Juliana, wanted to return to Constantinople, because in Jerusalem many suitors desired to enter her into a second marriage due to her great beauty and wealth, though she did not want to remarry. Therefore, deciding to return to her homeland in Constantinople, she also made arrangements to have the body of her husband returned there as well.

At first Patriarch Cyril of Jerusalem did not allow her to remove the burial chest of her husband, but she wrote to her father in Constantinople concerning this matter, who in turn sent a letter to Patriarch Cyril with a royal order that Juliana should bring the burial chest of her husband to Constantinople. Patriarch Cyril therefore gave his permission. However, Juliana mistakenly took the wrong burial chest, by divine Providence, and instead of her husbands took that of Saint Stephen. This

chest was enthroned on an ass, and carried to Ashkelon. Yet throughout the night it was heard from the heavens angelic voices, which could be heard for a great distance, saying: "Glory to God in the Highest, and on earth peace, to men of good pleasure," and a most beautiful fragrance of myrrh filled the area. Meanwhile demons would yell out from far away that Stephen passing by them, and that they were invisibly being tormented. When they arrived in Ashkelon, fifty flora were payed for a boat to take them to Constantinople, and many miracles took place at that time.

When they arrived in Constantinople, news reached the emperor that the relic of the Protomartyr Stephen had arrived, to his great joy. The relic was received by the Archbishop and all the clergy, and a procession was made to bring it to the palace. The chest with the sacred relic was carried by mules on a carriage, and when they arrived at Constantinae, which was in fact the ancestral plot of Juliana at Constantinople, the mules stopped and would not proceed further.

Then one mule spoke in a human voice and said: "Why do you beat us? The holy relic must be placed here." When the Archbishop and all those present heard the mule speak thus, they all glorified God with a loud voice. The emperor was gladdened when he heard about this, so he ordered a church be built there in honor of the Protomartyr to house the chest with his relics. This arrival of the relic is honored by the Church on August 2nd. (*from johnsanidopoulos.com*)

### **Today's Epistle Lesson – St. Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians 1:10-18**

Brethren, I plead with you by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and *that* there be no divisions among you, but *that* you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. For it has been declared to me concerning you, my brethren, by those of Chloe's *household*, that there are contentions among you. Now I say this, that each of you says, "I am of Paul," or "I am of Apollos," or "I am of Cephas," or "I am of Christ." Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul? I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius, lest anyone should say that I had baptized in my own name. Yes, I also baptized the household of Stephanas. Besides, I do not know whether I baptized any other. For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel, not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of no effect. For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

## **Today's Gospel Lesson – Saint Matthew 14:14-22**

At that time, when Jesus went out He saw a great multitude; and He was moved with compassion for them, and healed their sick. When it was evening, His disciples came to Him, saying, "This is a deserted place, and the hour is already late. Send the multitudes away, that they may go into the villages and buy themselves food." But Jesus said to them, "They do not need to go away. You give them something to eat." And they said to Him, "We have here only five loaves and two fish." He said, "Bring them here to Me." Then He commanded the multitudes to sit down on the grass. And He took the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up to heaven, He blessed and broke and gave the loaves to the disciples; and the disciples gave to the multitudes. So they all ate and were filled, and they took up twelve baskets full of the fragments that remained. Now those who had eaten were about five thousand men, besides women and children. Immediately Jesus made His disciples get into the boat and go before Him to the other side, while He sent the multitudes away.

## **A Word From the Holy Fathers**

At the creation of man the love of God towards the human race was manifested, unutterably and incalculably, for God gave to man feelings of soul and body. The feelings of soul are mind, thought or understanding, word, imagination, and feeling of heart. The feelings of the body are sight, smell, hearing, taste, and touch. By means of the one and the other, we perform virtues of the soul and body. It was pleasing to Christ our God that books should be written so that a man might, by their means, judge properly and be instructed in the fear of God, the beginning of spiritual wisdom. The fear of God gives birth to faith; faith to hope; home to love towards God and men; love to patience and many other virtues; patience to obedience and every virtue; obedience to trust; trust to fasting, fasting to purity and silence; silence gives birth to continence, prayer, tears, vigil, lamentation, vigilance, sobriety and much else, and cuts off evil speaking. Lamentation gives birth to unacquisitiveness, which gives birth to righteousness and cuts off every dispute. Prayer gives birth to understanding, sobriety of mind, tears, joy, humility of heart, meekness. Humility... cuts off pride, vainglory, and spouts forth spiritual fruit. From these virtues are annihilated all passions of soul and body and, little by little, grace increases. These virtues are indispensable for those who are healthy of body and for those who are possessed by fleshly passions.

Remember the terrible and frightful wonder: that your Creator for your sake became Man, and deigned to suffer for the sake of your salvation. His angels tremble, the Cherubim are terrified, the Seraphim are in fear, and all the heavenly powers ceaselessly give praise; and you, unfortunate soul, remain in laziness. At least from this time forth arise and do not put off, my beloved soul, holy

repentance, contrition of heart and penance for your sins. Putting them off year after year, month after month, day after day, you will not at all desire with your whole heart to repent, and you will not find one to have compassion on you. O, with what torture you will then begin to repent, but without success. Having the opportunity today to do some good deed, do not put off until tomorrow, my beloved soul, holy repentance, because you do not know what today will bring forth or what misfortune might happen to you this night. For you do not know what the day or night will bring, whether a long life stands before you or not, or if you will suddenly and unexpectedly receive a miserable and speedy death. Now, my beloved soul, is the time of patience; now is the time to endure sorrow; now is the time to keep the commandments and fulfill the virtues; now is the time of sweet lamentation and tearful mourning. If you truly wish to be saved, my soul, be in love with sorrow and groaning, as previously you loved repose. Live as if you were daily dying; soon your life will pass by like the shadow of clouds before the sun, and you will be forgotten. The days of our life, as it were, are shed forth into the air; and so, do not hesitate even before the most difficult sorrow....

O man, death stands before you. If you will labor, you will be rescued with eternal life in the future age. Virtue is acquired by every kind of forcing oneself. Therefore, if you wish to conquer the passions, cut off the life of pleasure; but if you are pursuing food, you will spend a life in passions; the soul will not be humbled if the flesh is not deprived of bread. It is not possible to deliver the soul from perdition while protecting the body from unpleasantness. Therefore let us return to what is primary. If you wish to be saved..., to enter into the heavenly kingdom and receive eternal life – then refuse your flesh, taste voluntary bitterness, and endure difficult sorrows, as all the saints tasted and endured. And when a man is preparing himself and gives himself the command to endure for the sake of God all sorrows which come upon him, then light and painless seem for him all sorrows, unpleasantnesses and attacks of devils and men. He does not fear death, and nothing can separate such a one from the love of Christ.

Have you heard, my beloved soul, how the holy fathers spent their lives? O my soul, imitate them at least a little. Did they not have tears? Were they not sorrowful, thin and worn out in body? Did they not have bodily illnesses, great wounds and lamentation of soul with tears? Were they not clothed in the same infirm body that we have? Did they not have the desire for splendid, sweet and light repose in this world and every bodily repose? Yes, they desired these things, and their bodies in truth were afflicted, but they exchanged their desires for patience and their grief for future joy. They subjected the flesh to the spirit and fulfilled all the other commandments of God, and were saved.

– St. Paisius Velichkovsky

## The Dormition Fast

The Dormition fast was established as preceding the great feasts of the Transfiguration of the Lord and of the Dormition of the Mother of God. It lasts two weeks — from August 1–August 14. The Dormition fast comes down to us from the early days of Christianity.

We find a clear reference to the Dormition fast in a conversation of Leo the Great from around the year 450 A.D.: “The Church fasts are situated in the year in such a way that a special abstinence is prescribed for each time. Thus, for spring there is the spring fast — the Forty Days Great Lent; for summer there is the summer fast [the Apostles’ fast]; for autumn there is the autumn fast, in the seventh month [Dormition fast]; for winter there is the winter fast [Nativity fast].”

St. Symeon of Thessalonica writes that, “The fast in August [Dormition fast] was established in honor of the Mother of God the Word; Who, foreknowing Her repose, ascetically labored and fasted for us as always, although She was holy and immaculate, and had no need for fasting. Thus, She especially prayed for us in preparation for being transported from this life to the future life, when Her blessed soul would be united through the Divine Spirit with Her Son. Therefore, we also should fast and praise Her, emulating Her life, urging Her thereby to pray for us. Some, by the way, say that this fast was instituted on the occasion of two feasts — the Transfiguration and the Dormition. I also consider it necessary to remember these two feasts — one which gives us light, and the other which is merciful to us and intercedes for us.”

The Dormition fast is not as strict as the Great Fast, but it is stricter than the Apostle’s and Nativity fasts. On Monday, Wednesdays and Fridays of the Dormition fast, the Church rubrics prescribe xerophagy, that is, the strictest fast of uncooked food (without oil); on Tuesdays and Thursdays, “with cooked food, but with no oil”; on Saturdays and Sundays wine and oil are allowed.

Until the feast of the Transfiguration of the Lord, when grapes and apples are blessed in the churches, the Church requires that we abstain from these fruits. According to the tradition of the Holy Fathers, “If one of the brethren should eat the grapes before the feast, then let him be forbidden for obedience’s sake to taste of the grapes during the entire month of August.”

On the feast of the Transfiguration of the Lord, the Church rubrics allow fish. After that day, on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays, the fruits of the new harvest would always be included in the meals. The spiritual fast is closely united with the bodily, just as our soul is united with the body, penetrates it, enlivens it, and makes one united whole with it, as the soul and body make one living human being. Therefore, in fasting bodily we must at the same time fast spiritually: “Brothers, in

fasting bodily let us also fast spiritually, severing all union with unrighteousness,” the Holy Church enjoins us.

The main thing in fasting bodily is restraint from abundant, tasty and sweet foods; the main thing in fasting spiritually is restraint from passionate, sinful movements that indulge our sensual inclinations and vices. The former is renunciation of the more nourishing foods for fasting food, which is less nourishing; the latter is the renunciation of our favorite sins for exercise in the virtues which oppose them.

The essence of the fast is expressed in the following Church hymn: “If you fast from food, my soul, but are not purified of the passions, in vain do we comfort ourselves by not eating. For if the fast does not bring correction, then it will be hateful to God as false, and you will be like unto the evil demons, who never eat.” The Great Fast and the Dormition Fast are particularly strict with regard to entertainment — in Imperial Russia even civil law forbade public masquerades and shows during these fasts. (*from pravoslavie.ru*)



## **August Anniversaries and Birthdays**

### **Anniversaries:**

Doug & Sandy Tucker 11<sup>th</sup>      Dana & Olga Dewey 12<sup>th</sup>

David & Kathryn Newman 17<sup>th</sup>    William & Gabriela Howl 24<sup>th</sup>



### **Birthdays:**

Larry Hartenstein 4 <sup>th</sup>	Kari David 7 <sup>th</sup>	Sandy Tucker 8 <sup>th</sup>
Reagan Beauchamp 13 <sup>th</sup>	Elena Chadwick 14 <sup>th</sup>	David Newman 15 <sup>th</sup>
Carol Wright 16 <sup>th</sup>	Carol Vallandingham 19 <sup>th</sup>	Anna Connour 24 <sup>th</sup>
Ashley Vallandingham 27th		

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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 & Mt. Kenya, Fr. John & Pani Betty Jean Baranik, Presbytera Katie Baker & family, Santiago Alzugaray, Jeffrey Carey, Tatyana & Slava Chumak & family, Xenia Chilkowich, Jon Church, Ramius Connour, Luke Cooper, Tina Crull, Mary Diane David, Ron Dominiecki, Linda A. Georgiev, Heather Himler, John Homick, Cameron Houk, Howl family, Helen Janowiak, John M. Janowiak, Tucker Karl & family, Robert & Pam Karpin, Andrew Kinn, Kopan family, Brian, Helen, Luke & Mia 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 & Christina Ristas, Robinson Family, Samson Family, Sharon Sheptak, Bernie Takabayashi & family, Dawn & Faith Ulmschneider, Joe & Darlene Waters, Christine, Marshall, Nathaniel, Dcn. Nectarios & Ia, the Syrian Christians displaced by war, Mother Virginia Marie & the Carmelite Nuns of Port Tobacco, and those in need of our prayers. (Please advise Fr. Joseph of changes.)