

SOBORNOST

St. Thomas the Apostle Orthodox Church

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American Carpatho-Russian Orthodox Diocese

ECUMENICAL PATRIARCHATE
OF CONSTANTINOPLE

SERVICES

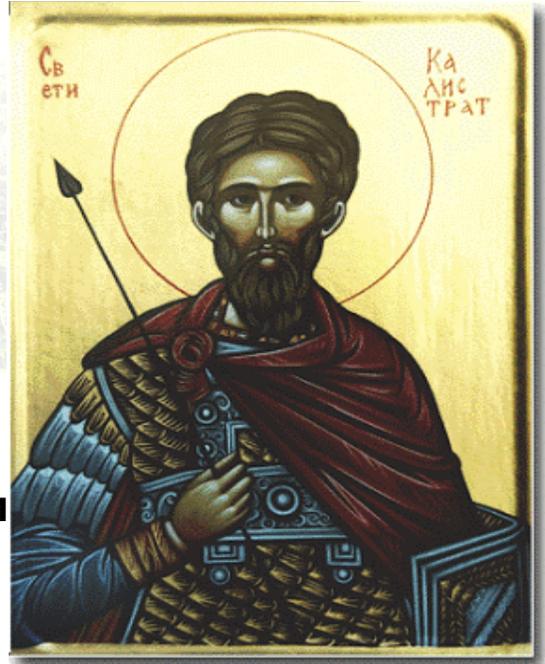
Wed: Moleben to the Theotokos 6:00 AM

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 for information on when you may attend.

September 27, 2020 | 16th Sunday After Pentecost

Holy Martyr Callistratus (Kallistratos) and Companions

Kallistratos was born in the middle of the third century to Christian parents living in Chalcedon, an ancient town on the opposite shore from Byzantium (present day Kadiköy). Okorus, one of his forefathers who was also a soldier in the Roman army under Pontius Pilate, was in Jerusalem at the time of Christ's crucifixion, burial, and resurrection. Having witnessed these events first hand, and hearing the preaching of the apostles he believed and was baptized on Pentecost. Okorus returned home and instructed his family, and anyone who would listen, in the Christian faith. Each generation taught and followed Christ and His teachings, which Kallistratos also embraced.

Volunteering to serve in the Roman army, Kallistratos found himself to be the only Christian in the Chalcedon unit. Secretly, he would arise late at night to pray, and, secretly, he would teach other soldiers about Christ. After serving for several years, his unit was stationed at Rome in 288. This occurred during the reign of Diocletian (284-305) who spent his first fifteen years as emperor purging his

military and government of Christians, which was followed by his "Great Persecution" of Christians in 303.

One night, while in Rome, some of his fellow-soldiers overheard him praying to Jesus and tried to persuade him to offer incense and blood to Zeus, but to no avail. Being under orders from the emperor, they reported him to Captain Presentinus the following morning. Immediately, Presentinus had Kallistratos brought before him, questioned him, and commanded that he be obedient, comply with Diocletian's edict, and make a sacrifice to Zeus, lest he, the captain, be compelled to cruelly destroy him. Remaining steadfast, Kallistratos responded that if he denied Christ, then Christ would deny him, and he would be shut out of the Kingdom of Heaven (Matt. 10:33) and suffer eternal torment. The captain promptly ordered Kallistratos to be held down and beaten with clubs. While eight men took turns beating him, Kallistratos prayed to Christ that He would strengthen him and that he would remain faithful against the evil one.

Seeing blood gushing forth in rivulets, Presentinus commanded his soldiers to cease beating Kallistratos and, once again, gave him the opportunity to worship the Roman gods lest he suffer more grievously. Kallistratos refused and prayed that others from his unit would also rise up and praise God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Infuriated by his answer, Captain Presentinus had his men shatter potsherds, scatter them on the ground, and stretch Kallistratos over the sharp pieces so that the back side of him would be further lacerated. Then he ordered a funnel to be placed in his mouth and water to be poured down his throat until he swelled up like a full wineskin. Continually praying to remain indomitable in his faith, Kallistratos admonished the captain as a shameless combatant for Satan and prophesied that Christ would call forth men from his own unit, illuminate them in the True Faith, and build a Christian church in the city. Presentinus flung these words back at Kallistratos, informing him that he ludicrously thought that he could lead others to his God and found a church while he himself was the one who was impious and faced death.

Having received orders to drown Kallistratos, the captain had him sewn up in a large, linen sack, loaded onto a boat, carried far offshore, and thrown into the sea. Captain Presentinus and his soldiers watched from the shore as the men rowed back to land. All the while, Kallistratos prayed fervently. He was caught between some sharp rocks which tore the sack apart. At that moment, by the command of God, two dolphins flanked him and bore him to shore. Kallistratos began to sing a psalm of thanksgiving, but the soldiers with their captain observed everything with astonishment.

Upon reaching Kallistratos, forty-nine of the soldiers fell down before him and professed their faith in Jesus Christ. Thereupon, Kallistratos prayed that the Lord would preserve and strengthen them. Nevertheless, Presentinus swore by his gods and accused Kallistratos of using sorcery to bewitch these men. Ordering all fifty of these soldiers to be bound and taken back to their military base, Presentinus sat down upon his judgement seat, commanded that each one of the forty-nine be brutally beaten with rods and cast into prison. That night, Captain Presentinus pondered what to do, for losing fifty soldiers under his command was a considerable reduction of men in his unit.

In prison, the forty-nine men entreated Kallistratos to make them Christians and to teach them the word of God. After praying over them, Kallistratos began instructing them and answering their questions. A law-court scribe who was near the prison listened to and recorded their words in court shorthand. When, at last, he finished, and everyone grew silent, Kallistratos spent the remainder of the night in prayer.

At dawn, Captain Presentinus sat upon the judgement seat in a great hall where statues of the various Roman gods had been set up. The soldiers from the Chalcedon unit and a good number of soldiers with their captains were assembled there. Presentinus commanded that the fifty be brought before him. Whereupon, the captain asked Kallistratos where he had learned to inveigle his soldiers, and was he ready to instruct them to sacrifice to the Roman gods and save themselves. Kallistratos responded that he had already given his answer and would not deny Christ, but, as for the others, they were adults and could answer for themselves. Asserting that they had been deceived, Presentinus inquired whether they wanted to cease following this sorcerer or not. With one voice, they professed their faith in the Triune God.

Again, Captain Presentinus ordered them to be scourged with green switches, bound hand and foot, and dragged to the edge of a lake. There Presentinus allowed them one last chance to sacrifice to the Roman gods or be drowned. Each confessed their faith in Christ and their willingness to die for Him. Just before they were to be cast into the lake, Kallistratos entreated the true God that this would be their baptism and entry into His Kingdom that they may become fellow-workers with the Holy Spirit. Having simultaneously said, "Amen", they were thrown into the lake.

Immediately, upon entering the water, their bonds were loosed, they rose to the surface, walked upon the shore, and were resplendent with the grace of the Holy Spirit. As they came out of the water, a light shown over their heads and a voice from Heaven spoke, saying, "Be of good cheer, My loved ones, for I am with you;

be ye glad, for, behold I have made ready for you a place in My kingdom. Rejoice, for I have written your names in My record in the Book of Life." At the same time, there was thunder and a great earthquake which cause the idols to fall and break into pieces. Upon witnessing these wonders, one hundred and five more soldiers believed in Christ Jesus.

Remaining steadfastly callous and unbelieving, the fearful Presentinus ordered the fifty returned to prison where they prayed and, once again, Kallistratos taught them. Meanwhile, Captain Presentinus sought the counsel of a *vir ducenarius*, a commander of two hundred men. Acting upon his advice, Presentinus sent soldiers into the prison with orders to behead all fifty. Thus, on the 27th day of September, they became martyrs for Christ and received crowns of glory and everlasting life.

The hundred and five were baptized in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Secretly by night, they gathered the relics of the fifty Saints and gave them a proper burial at the place where they later built a church dedicated to Saint Kallistratos. Many healings of both soul and body have poured forth from his shrine.

It was reported that the one hundred and five soldiers were later beheaded. (*from johnsanidopoulos.com*)

Today's Epistle Lesson – St. Paul's Second Letter to the Corinthians 6:1-10

Brethren, we then, *as workers together with Him* also plead with *you* not to receive the grace of God in vain. For He says: "In an acceptable time I have heard you, And in the day of salvation I have helped you." Behold, now *is* the accepted time; behold, now *is* the day of salvation. We give no offense in anything, that our ministry may not be blamed. But in all *things* we commend ourselves as ministers of God: in much patience, in tribulations, in needs, in distresses, in stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labors, in sleeplessness, in fastings; by purity, by knowledge, by longsuffering, by kindness, by the Holy Spirit, by sincere love, by the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armor of righteousness on the right hand and on the left, by honor and dishonor, by evil report and good report; as deceivers, and *yet* true; as unknown, and *yet* well known; as dying, and behold we live; as chastened, and *yet* not killed; as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and *yet* possessing all things.

Today's Gospel Lesson – Saint Luke 5:1-11

At that time, as the multitude pressed about Jesus to hear the word of God, He stood by the Lake of Gennesaret, and saw two boats standing by the lake; but the fishermen had gone from them and were washing *their* nets. Then He got into one of the boats, which was Simon's, and asked him to put out a little from the land.

And He sat down and taught the multitudes from the boat. When He had stopped speaking, He said to Simon, "Launch out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch." But Simon answered and said to Him, "Master, we have toiled all night and caught nothing; nevertheless at Your word I will let down the net." And when they had done this, they caught a great number of fish, and their net was breaking. So they signaled to *their* partners in the other boat to come and help them. And they came and filled both the boats, so that they began to sink. When Simon Peter saw *it*, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!" For he and all who were with him were astonished at the catch of fish which they had taken; and so also *were* James and John, the sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. And Jesus said to Simon, "Do not be afraid. From now on you will catch men." So when they had brought their boats to land, they forsook all and followed Him.

A Word From the Holy Fathers

Christ the Savior, our true God, when He wished to entrust the world to His chief disciples and Apostles Peter and Paul, so that they might preach in it His Gospel and by their preaching might instruct those who believed in Him in the true knowledge of God and the keeping of His commandments, and so that they might be merciful to sinners and the more easily forgive the transgressions of those who repent, by His divine and unattainable decrees allowed that Peter should renounce Him three times and Paul should persecute and devastate His Church. After Peter's true repentance and Paul's miraculous coming to believe in Christ, both of these Holy Apostles, inasmuch as they had known in themselves the weakness of human nature, were there-fore merciful, in the likeness of Christ the Lord, to those who transgressed and truly repented; and as they bore the burden of everyone on themselves, so also they inspired all to thus, saying, "Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ (Gal. 6:2)....

Divine obedience is something so necessary for the true pleasing of God, that it is not possible without it to please God. Therefore, all-holy obedience was planted by God in three places: in the heavens, in paradise, and on earth. In the heavens, among the heavenly powers; in paradise, in the first-created men; and on earth, in the holy disciples and apostles of the Lord. In all three of these places there appeared the fruit of the most blessed obedience and also the fruit of thrice-cursed disobedience. In the heavens, all the heavenly powers, remaining by their good will in obedience to God, were vouchsafed, by being enlightened by the Holy Spirit, to remain eternally in Him. But the devil, being from the Angelic order, by his own free will fell away from obedience, and becoming proud, was cast down from the heavens together with all the fallen-away powers of the same Angelic

order who freely obeyed his impious counsel; being deprived of the Divine light, they became darkness by their own will, and were made eternally enemies of God and of the salvation of right-believing Christians. Behold how the fruit both of obedience and of disobedience was manifested in the heavens.

In paradise, as long as the first-created ones remained in true obedience to God, they took sweet enjoyment in beholding God face to face and in multiform gifts of the Holy Spirit. But when of their own free will, obeying the counsel of the devil and falling away from obedience, they became proud, desiring to be equal to God, then they received the sentence of death from God and were banished from paradise, and were the cause of death for the whole human race. And if the Son of God by His obedience unto death to God the Father had not destroyed the disobedience of Adam, there would have remained for the human race no hope at all for salvation from death and eternal perdition. Behold how in paradise, in the first-created ones, the fruit of obedience and of disobedience was shown.

On earth, Christ the Son of God, having come down from Heaven not to do His own will but the will of the Father Who sent Him, to Whom He was obedient unto death, the death of the Cross, planted His Divine obedience in His holy disciples and Apostles,. Remaining in it even unto death, they were enabled by their preaching to bring the world to the knowledge of God, and now with Christ their Lord and Teacher they reign in the heavens. But the thrice-cursed Judas, who fell away from obedience and in place of the Lord obeyed in all things the devil, fell into despair, hanged himself, and perished eternally with soul and body. Behold how on earth the fruit of obedience and of disobedience was manifested.

Divine obedience, therefore, is greatly to be praised, as it is, according to the teaching of St. John of the Ladder and other Holy Fathers, the mother of the foundation of all the Gospel commandments, namely, love, which is made perfect by obedience, as the Lord has said: "If you love Me, you will keep my commandments." And again, "He who has my commandments and keeps them is he who loves Me," And again, "He who does not love Me does not keep My words" (John 14:15,21,24). And the keeping of God's commandments and His words is nothing else than perfect obedience toward Christ the Lord. Divine obedience is such a great virtue before God that, according to the common teaching of many saints, true doers of obedience, who have remained to the end of their lives in true obedience, receive a martyr's crown from Christ the Lord. For the cutting off of their own will and understanding in everything before the superior is reckoned by Christ, in the day of His righteous rewarding according to deeds, as a mental and voluntary shedding of blood for His name.

– St. Paisius Velichkovsky

Also Commemorated Today: Apostles Mark, Aristarchus, & Zenon of the Seventy

Mark, also known as John (Acts: 12:12), was the nephew of Saint Barnabas (June 11) from his brother. It was in the house of his mother Maria that the persecuted disciples found shelter after the Ascension of the Lord. In 2 Timothy 4:11, written when the Apostle Paul was imprisoned in Rome, he says, "Only Luke is with me. Get Mark and bring him with you, because he is helpful to me in my ministry." That Mark went to Rome seems evident from Philemon 24, "Epaphras, my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus, sends you greetings. And so do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas and Luke, my fellow workers," and Colossians 4:10, "My fellow prisoner Aristarchus sends you his greetings, as does Mark, the nephew of Barnabas. (You have received instructions about him; if he comes to you, welcome him.)" He went on to become Bishop of Apollonia, and through his preaching of the gospel, he banished the worship of the idols. He is commemorated both on October 30th and September 27th, though Saint Nikodemos the Hagiorite argues they were different people because the latter is said to have been Bishop of Byblos, whose shadow alone was able to heal the sick, but they were most likely the same.

The Apostle Paul mentions Aristarchus several times. He was one of those faithful companions of the apostle Paul who shared with him his labors and sufferings. He is suddenly mentioned along with Gaius as having been seized by the excited Ephesians during the riot stirred up by the silversmiths (Acts 19:29). They are designated "men of Macedonia, Paul's companions in travel." We learn later that he was a native of Thessalonica (Acts 20:4; Acts 27:2). They were probably seized to extract from them information about their leader Paul, but when they could tell nothing, and since they were Greeks, nothing further was done to them.

When Aristarchus attached himself to Paul we do not know, but he seems after the Ephesian uproar to have remained in Paul's company. He was one of those who accompanied Paul from Greece via Macedonia (Acts 20:4). Having preceded Paul to Troas, where they waited for him, they traveled with him to Palestine. He is next mentioned as accompanying Paul to Rome (Acts 27:2). There he attended Paul and shared his imprisonment. He is mentioned in two of the letters of the Roman captivity, in the Epistle to the Church at Colossians 4:10, and in the Epistle to Philemon (Philemon 1:24), in both of which he sends greetings. In the former Paul calls him "my fellow-prisoner."

According to tradition, Aristarchus was martyred by beheading during the persecution of Nero. This is affirmed on his feast celebrated on April 14th. Dorotheos, Bishop of Tyre, distinguishes him from another Apostle Aristarchus, who was Bishop of Syrian Apamea and commemorated on September 27th, but

they are probably the same person. In the Synaxarion for September 27th, he is said to have imitated Saint John the Forerunner in eating only locusts and honey and wearing a leather garment.

Zenon is also known as Zenas, whom Paul writes about in his Epistle to Titus (3:13): "Do everything you can to help Zenas the lawyer and Apollos on their way and see that they have everything they need." According to tradition, it was Zenon the lawyer who authored the life of the Apostle Titus. He was ordained by the Apostle Peter as the Bishop of Diospolis, which is probably the city later known as Laodicea. Having become a dwelling-place of the Holy Spirit, he liberated many from the error of idolatry. (*from johnsanidopoulos.com*)

SPF50 – Scripture, Prayer, Family

Orthodox Christian families face many challenges. Engaging children with their faith both in church and at home and helping parents keep Christ as Head of their household present ongoing difficulties. Far too often, what is experienced at church on Sundays is not brought back into the home. When that disconnect remains, as youth leave home to begin a new life on their own, they will often leave the Church behind as well. In the search for answers to help families, the best solution may be the simplest one. Praying together and reading Scripture together are pillars of a Christ-centered Orthodox Christian family. While families may desire to have these activities in their home, they may not be sure how to start. SPF50 intends to help our families bridge that gap.

SPF stands for "Scripture, Prayer, Family" and is designed to equip families to read the Scriptures and pray together at home. Why "50"? Fr. David Mastroberte explains: "On average, if a family uses the recommended Bible readings and prayers, they will spend approximately 50 minutes per month in these spiritual exercises. This is *not* a time limit, but rather meant to encourage even the busiest family that they can make these a part of their life and learn to love encountering God in prayer and the Scriptures."

The third installment of SPF50 will start September 20 and end November 14, 2020. It contains the appropriate prayers for families and a reading plan for the Gospel of St. Luke. There are also supplemental resources to help families get started and maintain participation. SPF50 is not meant to be separate from the ministry of the parish, but rather an extension of it. Under the guidance of their Priest, participating families are encouraged to meet on a monthly basis to foster fellowship and support. Quality time with our Lord is hard to come by. Quality time with your family is hard to come by. SPF50 intends to help families have both. Each week SPF50 will offer a new audio or video recording to help us to encourage us in our life of faith at home with our families. The next set of reflections for the Gospel of St. Luke will begin on September 20, 2020.

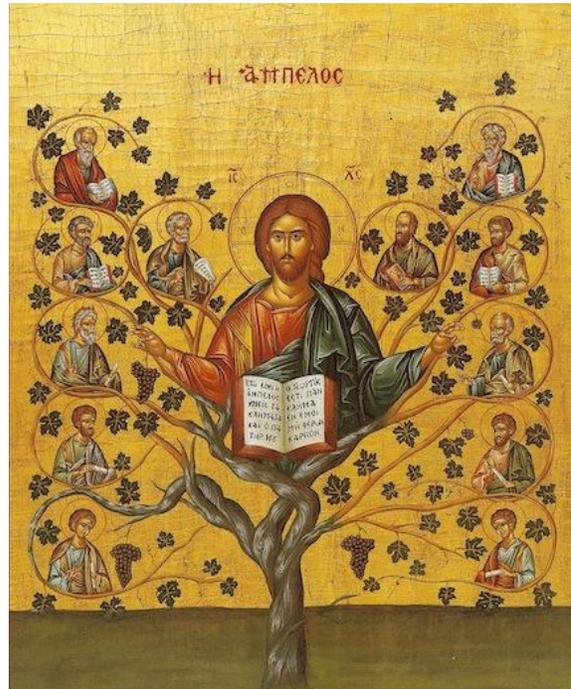
One will be posted each week. These can be found at <https://www.acrod.org/ministries/acrod-family/spf50>,

Calling all Diocesan Youth

Ages 5-18

To Come be a part of...

The Vine and the Branches



A First-of-its-Kind Diocesan Youth Event

When: Sunday, September 27, 2020

6:30pm – 8pm

Where: Online

See your friends and be together

Have some fun

Learn a Little

Hear from His Eminence Metropolitan Gregory

And Much More...

The Event is Free-of-Charge

Pre-Register at

<https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZUlf-->

[trzqrE9FZAtxyE1kEWLvKcFMMY1D](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/8441111111)

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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, Patty Blaydoe, 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, 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, Nicholas Pavlik, 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. Nectaros & 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.)