

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.**

**November 22, 2020 | 24th Sunday After Pentecost
After-feast of the Entry of the Most Holy Mother of
God into the Temple | Apostles Philemon,
Archippus & Onesimus of the 70**

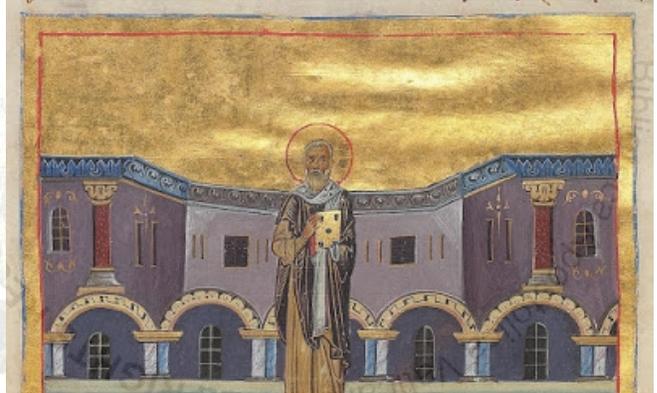
A bright green land cherishes Philemon, who is beaten by the bloodthirsty with the shoots of a willow.

Archippus longed for the cornerstone, and stones fulfilled this longing.

Onesimus laid out his legs for crushing, legs which bravely ran the roads for Paul.

Apphia is laid out and struck on the ground, to the heavens having the eyes of her heart.

These four Apostles were all disciples of the Apostle Paul, and are mentioned individually in his Epistle to Philemon. In the first verse of this epistle, he writes: "Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus, and Timothy our brother, to Philemon our dear friend and fellow worker - also to Apphia our sister and Archippus our fellow soldier" and to the church that meets in your home."



Philemon was made the Bishop of Gaza by the Apostle Paul. He drove away from the inhabitants the darkness of ignorance and illuminated them with the light the knowledge of God. Then he and his wife, Apphia, with the Apostle Archippus his son, ministered to the town of Colossae from its Christian center, Philemon's home. There also they preached the word of truth.

During a pagan feast to the goddess Artemis, the Christians of Colossae had gathered in Philemon's home for prayer. When the pagans learned of it they became enraged and raided the home and took the Apostles Philemon, Apphia, and Archippus to be killed. The other Christians managed to flee in fear. At first, they were whipped and afterwards they were buried up to their waists and the pagans began to stone them. They then killed Philemon and Apphia by laying them on the ground and beating them with sticks. Archippus they removed from the pit barely alive and left him to the amusement of the children. The children pierced him throughout with knives, and then he was stoned to death.

In his youth Onesimus was a servant of Philemon. Fearing punishment for an offense against his master, Onesimus fled to Rome, but he was imprisoned for being a runaway slave. In prison he came across the Apostle Paul and was enlightened by him, and was baptized. Paul was personally acquainted with Philemon, and wrote him a letter filled with love, asking him to forgive the runaway slave and to accept him like a brother. He sent Onesimus with this letter. After Philemon received the letter, he not only forgave Onesimus, but also sent him back to the Apostle Paul in Rome. After the death of Paul he became a bishop and traveled to many places preaching the gospel. In Rome Onesimus was arrested and brought to trial before the Eparch Tertillus, during the reign of Emperor Trajan. He held the Saint in prison for eighteen days, and then sent him to prison in the city of Puteoli. After a while, the eparch sent for Onesimus and had him stoned and beheaded for still maintaining his faith in Christ.

It should be mentioned that the Apostle Onesimus is celebrated separately by the Church on February 15th, and the Apostle Archippus is celebrated on February 19th; today the primary celebration is for the Apostle Philemon and his wife Apphia. (*from johnsanidopoulos.com*)

Today's Epistle Lesson – St. Paul's Letter to the Ephesians 2:14-22

Brethren, He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, having abolished in His flesh the enmity, *that is*, the law of commandments *contained* in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man *from* the two, *thus* making peace, and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity. And He came and preached peace to you who were afar off and to those who were near.

For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father. Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief *cornerstone*, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.

Today's Gospel Lesson – Saint Luke 12:16-21

Jesus spoke this parable: “The ground of a certain rich man yielded plentifully. And he thought within himself, saying, ‘What shall I do, since I have no room to store my crops?’ So he said, ‘I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build greater, and there I will store all my crops and my goods. And I will say to my soul, ‘Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease; eat, drink, *and* be merry.’” But God said to him, ‘Fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?’ So *is* he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.”

A Word From the Holy Fathers

God's selection according to His foreknowledge for the sake of the future Mother of God was accomplished down through the generations until it reached the king and prophet David, the successors to his throne and his descendants. When the time came for God's choice to reach its culmination, Joachim and Anna, of the house and lineage of David, were picked out by Him. They were childless, but lived chastely together, and were more virtuous than all those who traced back their noble descent and character to David. With asceticism and prayer they begged God to deliver them from childlessness, and promised to dedicate to Him from infancy the child to be born to them. She who is now the Mother of God was promised and given to them by God as their daughter, that the girl with every virtue might be born of virtuous parents, the all-pure Maid of those who were exceptionally chaste, and that chastity, coming together with prayer and asceticism, might become as a result the mother of virginity, that virginity which without corruption brought forth, according to the flesh, the one who, in respect of His divinity, was begotten before all ages of a virgin Father. O, the wings of that prayer! With what boldness it came before God!

Since they had obtained that for which they had prayed, and knew the divine promise to them had been fulfilled, they in turn kept their promise to God. Being truthful people, dear to God and God-loving, they hastened, as soon as she was weaned, to bring the Most Holy Virgin, God's child and now the Mother of God, to His Temple, to the chief priest there. Even at that tender age, being full of divine

graces and not wanting in the perfection of her mental faculties, she understood, more than anyone else did at the time, what was happening to her. She showed as best she could that, rather than being led, she was coming to God by herself and of her own volition, as though it were natural for her to fly towards holy and divine love, and to consider entering the Holy of Holies and dwelling there as something desirable which she knew fitting for her.

When God's high priest understood that the Maid apparently possessed divine grace above all others, he had to count her worth of something more excellent than anyone else deserved. He led her into the Holy of Holies and then persuaded everyone to be content with what had happened. At the same time, God was also helping, showing His approval and sending heavenly nourishment defying description to the Virgin in that place, by the hand of an angel. This food strengthened her physically, and she was sustained and perfected in body with more purity and excellence than the bodiless angels, having heavenly beings to minister to her. She was not simply brought once into the Holy of Holies but was, as it were, taken into God's company for a period of several years, so that through her, when the time came, the heavenly mansions might be opened and be given as everlasting dwellings to those who believe in her mysterious childbearing.

In this way...she who was chosen from the elect of all ages, who was declared the Holy of Holies, whose body was purer and more divine than spirits cleansed by virtue, to such an extent that she was able to receive not just the form of divine words but the person of the only-begotten Word of the Father without beginning, was today justly consigned to the innermost hallowed sanctuary like God's treasure. When the time came, this treasure was to be used to enrich and adorn both heaven and earth, as indeed came to pass. Thus and on this account the Lord glorified His Mother before she gave birth, as well as afterward. As for us, understanding the salvation which was begun for us through her, may we render as much thanksgiving and praise as we can. In the Gospel it is written that a woman, having listened for a while to the Lord's saving words, gratefully pronounced a blessing on His Mother and gave thanks, lifting up her voice and crying out to the Lord from the crowd, "Blessed is the womb that bore you, and the breasts which you sucked" (Luke 11:27). As for us, we constantly have the words of eternal life in writing, and not just Christ's sayings, but also His miracles and His sufferings, and the raising up of our human nature from the dead accomplished by these sufferings, the ascension of our human nature from earth to heaven and the everlasting life and irrevocable salvation promised to us as a result. So how can we do other than extol and bless without ceasing the Mother of the Bestower of salvation, the giver of life, celebrating her conception, her birth, and now her coming to dwell in the Holy of Holies?

Let us too, brethren, move our dwelling-place from earth to on high. Let us be changed “from flesh to spirit” (that is to say, as St. Maximus the Confessor explains, they were transported from the plane of the physical and human to that of the spiritual and divine – ed.), and transfer our longing from fleeting concerns to things that endure. Let us despise the pleasures of the flesh, which ... soon pass away, and let us desire spiritual gifts which stay incorruptible. Let us raise our disposition and our thoughts from the disorder below and lift them up to the heavenly sanctuary, to that Holy of Holies where the Mother of God now dwells.

So shall our songs and prayers to her come before her with boldness pleasing to God for our benefit. Then, by her intercession, we shall be heirs not only of good things here and now, but of those lasting blessings to come, by the grace and love for mankind of Him who was born of her for our sake, Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom belong glory, honor and worship, together with the Father who is without beginning and the co-eternal, life-giving Spirit, now and for ever and unto the ages of ages. Amen.

– St. Gregory Palamas, *Homily 52*

The Distinguished Diocesan Donor Program Needs YOU!

Covid has turned much of our life upside down, including our Distinguished Diocesan Donors Program! The 2020 Fund Drive is still under way and will continue through the end of November. However, there will be no Fall DDD Dinners. We encourage as many parishioners as possible to participate. Gifts of \$100 or more are asked. Proceeds from the DDD benefit Camp Nazareth, and because Covid has caused all events and programs to be canceled, DDD is basically our only source of Camp income. Checks are payable to: Distinguished Diocesan Donors and may be sent to:

Diocesan Chancery
312 Garfield Street
Johnstown, PA 15906.

May the Lord bless you and yours during these stressful times.

Sincerely in Christ,

Very Rev. Protopresbyter Frank P. Miloro, Chancellor





His Eminence, Metropolitan Gregory's
NATIVITY FAST PRAYER CHALLENGE 2020

To Be Prayed Every Evening of the Nativity Fast

O Physician of Souls and Bodies: we pray that You continue to come to our aid now during the global spread of the Coronavirus.

May the sick regain their strength and health, and as they worry and grieve, defend them from further illness and despair. We offer thanks to You for those who have recovered. Grant rest to those who have reposed. Be with the families of those who are sick and those who have died.

Heal us from our fear, which prevents nations from working together and neighbors from helping one another. Remove from us all pride, which can make us claim immunity to a disease that knows no borders.

Give wisdom and strength to our President, our federal government, our state governments, together with the leaders of all nations, and give them foresight to act with charity and true concern for the well-being of the people they serve.

Be with the doctors, nurses, researchers and all medical professionals who seek to heal those affected and who put themselves at risk in the process.

Whether we are home or abroad, surrounded by many people suffering from this illness or only a few, we pray that You stay by our side and grant us courage and peace. *AMEN.*

Also Commemorated Today: Ven. Iakovos Tsalikes

The venerable St. Iakovos Tsalikes, the admirable Abbot of the Monastery of the Venerable David in Evia, was a long-range star who shined in our days with the rays of his simplicity, his goodness, his equal-to-the-angels state and his numerous wonders.

Elder Iakovos was the personification of love, a living embodiment of "the new life in Christ", a projector of virtue and a mirror of humility and temperance. He embodied and experienced the testament of grace and delighted all those who approached him, since he was entirely the "fragrance of Christ" (2 Cor. 2:15). With his sweet words he gave them rest and conveyed to them the good things of the Holy Spirit, "joy, peace and gentleness" (Gal. 5:22), with which he was gifted, affirming the Gospel phrase: "Out of the abundance of the heart the tongue speaks" (Matt. 12:34).

Elder Iakovos was a spiritual figure of the Monastery of the Venerable David, sent by the philanthropic Lord to the modern lawless Israel and admonished them with the example of his simple yet venerable life and the grace of his words which were always "seasoned with salt" (Gal. 4:6). The Elder was not very educated, but he was overshadowed, like the fishermen of Galilee, with the grace of the All-Holy Spirit, making wise the unwise and moving the lips of those chosen by God to spiritually guide the people to salvation.

Elder Iakovos was born on November 5, 1920 to pious parents, his mother Theodora being from Livisi in Asia Minor and his father Stavros from Rhodes. In early 1922 Turkish cetes captured his father and led him deep into Anatolia.

After the catastrophe of our blessed Asia Minor, which was allowed by God for our sins and apostasy, the family of the Elder followed the hard road of exile. Their ship transferred them over to Itea and from there they settled in Amfissa. There it pleased the Lord, in 1925, for his father to find them and together as a family they moved to Farakla in Evia.

At the age of seven the young divinely-illuminated Iakovos memorized the Divine Liturgy even though he was illiterate. In 1927 he attended elementary school and was distinguished for his performance and his obvious love for the Church and sacred writings.

The appearance of Saint Paraskevi to the young Iakovos and the revelation of his brilliant ecclesiastical future stimulated the faith and piety of the young student.

Often the purity of his life led him to pray for his suffering countrymen, whom he would heal by reading prayers that were irrelevant to their situation, but he did it with much devotion showing to all that the "grace of God was on him" (Lk. 2:40).

In 1933 he completed elementary school, but the financial difficulties of his family did not allow him to continue his studies. So he followed his father in his manual work.

Impressed by his melodious chanting the Metropolitan of Halkidos consecrated him a Reader.

What impressed everyone was his ascetic life, his prayerful disposition, his love for work, his lack of sleep, and his strict observance of the fasts.

In this voluntary personal deprivation he came to add the involuntary suffering of the whole family and that of all the hapless refugees from the dispossession.

In July of 1942 the mother of the Elder died, foretelling his future as a priest. He joined the army in 1947, where he remained undaunted by the derision of his colleagues, who jokingly called him "Father Iakovos".

However, he received admiration from his commander, who was among the few that sensed the future bright spiritual path of the young refugee.

After being released from the army in 1949, Iakovos, at the age of 29, was orphaned also of a father. His focus was on his sister, without, however, neglecting the thoughts of his childhood desire to enter the monastic state.

After his sister married, in November of 1952 he went to the Monastery of the Venerable David near Rovies, fulfilling his desire of completely dedicating his life to God.

At the age of 32 Iakovos was tonsured a Monk, and on December 19, 1952 he was ordained a Priest in Halkida by Metropolitan Gregory. He then continued his ascetic life in the Monastery, with concerted prayer in the cave of the Venerable David, with divine visions and miracles, which increased over time.

He achieved high measures in virtue and suffered many attacks from good-hating demons, who hated his equal-to-the-angels life. He often saw and spoke with Venerable David and Saint John the Russian, while he was also made worthy of the gifts of foresight and insight.

Often during the Divine Liturgy he would see Angels serving him in the Sacred Altar, Cherubim and Seraphim encircling him covering their faces with their six wings, revering the slain Lamb, the God-man Jesus, on the Holy Paten, broken but not divided, forever eaten yet never consumed.

In August of 1963 in a wondrous way he satiated with three kilos of noodles 75 laborers with generous servings with half a pot of leftovers. On the 25th of June in 1975 he became the Abbot of the Monastery and held this rudder firmly until his venerable repose on the 21st of November in 1991.

Due to his hermit and ascetic life, however, the health of the Elder was shaken, the veins of his legs rotted, and he had to undergo surgeries for his hernia, his appendix, his prostate and his heart, even being placed within him a pacemaker. From 1990 onwards his strength began to leave him. In September of 1991 he was hospitalized at the General State Hospital of Athens for a small infarction.

When he returned to the Monastery he suffered from inflammation, which, unfortunately, turned into pneumonia. He sensed his end. The morning of November 21, 1991 he followed the Service for the Entrance of our Theotokos, he chanted and he communed of the Immaculate Mysteries.

After confessing some of the faithful he took a walk around the Monastery. In the afternoon he confessed a spiritual daughter of his and waited for the return of his novice Iakovos from Limni, who that day was ordained a Deacon by the Metropolitan of Halkidos.

As soon as the fathers arrived the Elder tried to get up, but became dizzy. His breathing became heavy, his pulse weakened and from his lips came a soft blow. The Elder took the road to enter the Kingdom of Heaven.

The people who were informed of his funeral were few. The phones, however, took fire and from one person to another the sad news spread. The next day thousands of people flocked to the Monastery, clergy of all ranks and spiritual children of the Elder from all over Greece, who came to give their last embrace.

The courtyard of the Monastery was crowded. The funeral service was chanted outdoors and after his sacred body was processed around the Katholikon. During the procession many of the faithful saw the Elder get up from his coffin to bless the crowd.

Once the sacred body descended into the grave, with one voice the thousands of faithful with resurrection hymns and resurrection bells joyfully cried out: "Saint! Saint!"

Since then Elder Iakovos, with his dozens of posthumous miracles, has been classified in the souls of the faithful as a Saint, by those who await with longing his formal canonization by the Mother Church. *(from johnsanidopoulos.com)*

Prepare for Christmas with SPF50

The November-December 2020 edition of SPF50 is now available digitally on acrod.org. This issue begins the week of November 15th and includes a Scripture reading guide and prayers designed specifically for families to prepare to celebrate the Nativity of Our Lord. If you haven't tried SPF50 yet, consider joining in now.

While the holiday season is undoubtedly a busy time, by making a commitment to read from the Bible and pray together for 50 minutes a month, your family will “keep Christ in Christmas” while spending quality time together. To access this material or to find out more about how SPF50 can help your family grow in Christ, visit the Diocesan Website at [acrod.org](http://www.acrod.org) and look for the SPF50 logo.

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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, Presbyteria Katie Baker & family, Santiago Alzugaray, Patty Blaydoe, Jeffrey Carey, Tatyana & Slava Chumak & family, Xenia Chilkowich, Jon Church, Ramius Connour, Luke & Marlana 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.)