

# 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](mailto:fredgington@gmail.com)

[www.apostlethomas.org](http://www.apostlethomas.org)

*American Carpatho-Russian Orthodox Diocese*

*ECUMENICAL PATRIARCHATE  
OF CONSTANTINOPLE*

## SERVICES

**Wed: Moleben to the Theotokos 6:00 AM**

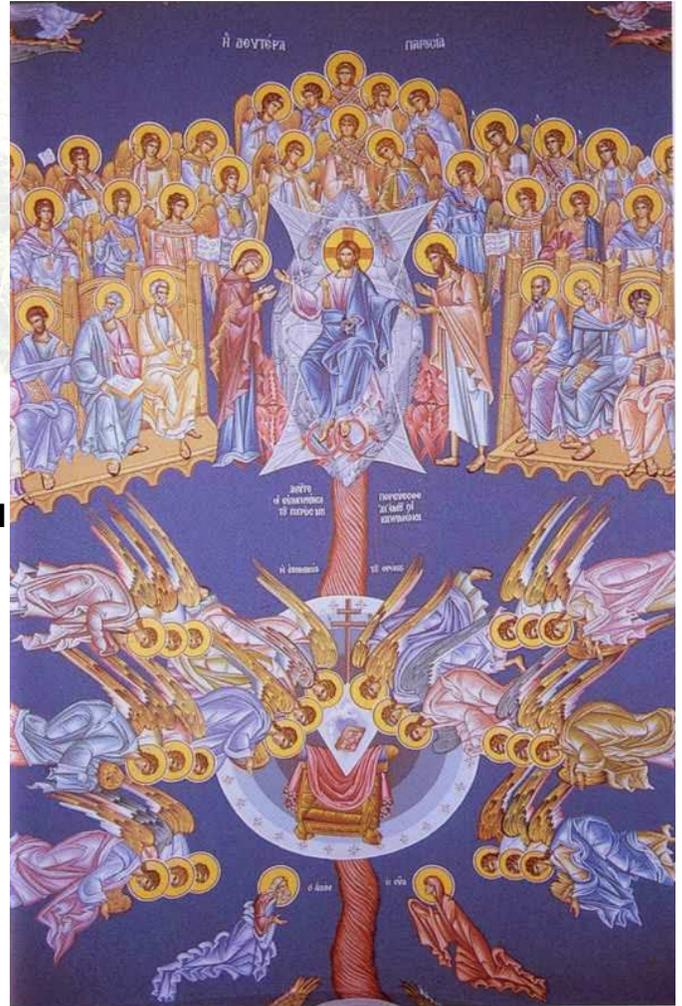
**Friday: Moleben to the Cross 6:00 AM**

**Saturday: 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.**



## March 7, 2021 | Sunday of the Last Judgment (Meatfare)

### A Patristic Explanation of the Symbolic Imagery of the Coming Judgment

By His Eminence Metropolitan Hierotheos of Nafpaktos and Agiou Vlasiou

The Second Coming of Christ and the resurrection of the dead are closely connected with the coming judgment, the so-called future tribunal. All men will stand before the dread judgment seat of Christ.

In the Creed we confess that Christ will come with glory "to judge the living and the dead." This conviction constitutes the central teaching of the Church, as we shall verify in what follows. In all the assemblies for worship and in the Divine Liturgy there are words about our presence before the throne of God. The priest prays: "For a Christian end of our life, painless, peaceful and unashamed, and for a good answer before the dread judgment seat of Christ, let us pray."

In what follows we shall have an opportunity to emphasize the fact that although we use images of a tribunal, the judgment will have more the character of a revelation and manifestation of the spiritual state of the person. Moreover, all the images used have a symbolic character. Christ and the saints, as we shall see, use such images to make people understand pictorially that dreadful day when they will see the reality. Consequently, unless we do away with the images, we must enter into their essence and inner content. According to St. Symeon the New Theologian, "What we have to say about the judgment is difficult to explain because it is not about present and visible things but about future and invisible ones". The present things are seen, the future is invisible, and that is why purity of nous, much prayer and much zeal are required.

In Holy Scripture a great deal is said about the coming judgment, which is a starting-point for eternal life and eternal Hell. Christ's parables about the Ten Virgins, the tares and the weddings are well known. It is not easy or possible for us to analyze all these elements. However, we shall set down the most significant ones.

Christ assured the people that He Himself would judge the people in the age to come. "For the Father judges no one, but has committed all judgment to the Son" (Jn. 5:22). And this is not independent of the fact that Christ is the prototype of man, since man is an image of Christ, but also the rebirth of man comes through Christ. He became man, suffered, was crucified, rose again and was taken up. He, then, will be the judge of men. "And He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that it is He who was ordained by God to be Judge of the living and the dead" (Acts 10:42).

Also the Apostle Paul preached the same teaching on Mars Hill, when he said: "He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all, by raising Him from the dead" (Acts 17:31). In these apostolic passages it appears that Christ will be the judge of men. A parallel passage from the Apostle Paul is his exhortation to his disciple Timothy: "I charge you therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at His epiphany and His kingdom." (2 Tim. 4:1).

The Second Coming of Christ is called epiphany and kingdom, which is connected with the judgment of the dead and living, that is to say, those who have died previously and those who will be living at that time.

The connection of the Second Coming of Christ with the throne shows both the majesty of God and Christ's authority to judge men, but also men's fear in the face of the judgment and the judge. Christ used this image when he said that when he

comes with the angels, "He will sit on the throne of His glory" (Matt. 25:31). The throne, which is a symbol of His glory, but also of the authority which He has over men, has its origin in the worship of the divinities of ancient times and of the god-emperor of the Romans, but also in the Old Testament, as well as in the Revelation of John. The Prophet-King David already writes in one of his psalms: "He has prepared His throne for judgment. He shall judge the world in righteousness" (Psalm 9:7-8).

And there is a portrayal saying "preparation of the throne", which has been connected with Golgotha. Since the eleventh century the depiction of the "preparation of the throne" has been connected with the Second Coming of Christ and the coming tribunal.

The meaning of the throne, which suggests the imperial throne and the tribunal, has been closely linked with Christ's judgment of the living and the dead, and we find it in many passages in the epistles of the Apostle Paul. Referring to the fact that we are all suppliants, servants of Christ, and we should not judge others, he affirms: "For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ" (Rom. 14:10). The Christians of Rome, to whom this is said, had knowledge and experience of what the emperor's and the judge's throne meant. He also says the same thing to the Christians of Corinth: "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad" (2 Cor. 5:10).

Since the final judgment of men will take place, and since the real Judge is Christ, Christians should avoid judging their fellow men, their brothers. The Apostle Paul writes: "He who judges me is the Lord, who will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness and reveal the counsels of the heart" (1 Cor. 4:5). In this passage, apart from the fact that it says that Christ is the true judge of men, at the same time the way in which He will judge is also presented. He who is the true light, by His appearing will reveal all the hidden things of darkness and will manifest all the wishes and desires which there are in the heart.

In another place the Apostle Paul refers to the judgment which will come from the saints. He writes: "Do you not know that the saints will judge the world?" (1 Cor. 6:2). This passage shows again the way in which the judgment will take place. It is not a matter of a worldly tribunal where the accusation will be pronounced, and there will be witnesses for the accusation and for the defense, and then the decision will be heard. The image of the future tribunal is taken from the judiciary, but its content is different. The appearing of the Sun of Righteousness will reveal everything, all will be stripped of their outward distinctions and there will be a comparison of saints with sinners. This is the meaning of the saying that the saints

will judge the world. We shall look at all these things in what follows when we speak of how the Fathers interpret the scriptural passages which refer to the future judgment.

Christ's parable of the wedding is well known. When the king came to the place where those invited to his son's wedding were gathered, he saw one person who was not wearing a wedding garment. Then he reprimanded him, saying, "Friend, how did you come in here without a wedding garment?" He commanded that he be bound hand and foot and cast into the outer fire, where there will be "weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Matt. 22:1-14).

According to the interpretation of this parable by St. Gregory Palamas, the wedding refers to the Second Coming of Christ and to the Kingdom of Heaven. The entry of the King, who is God, is "the manifestation at the time of the future judgment". The garment of the spiritual wedding, which was indispensable for those invited, was virtue. And naturally when the Holy Fathers speak of virtue, they mean the fruits of the Holy Spirit, and not a superficial human virtue. He who lacks the garment of virtues will not only be unworthy of the Kingdom of God, but also will be punished. Not only the soul but also the body will prove to be unworthy of that bridal chamber, if it has not lived in self-control, purity and sobriety. The punishment for not having a wedding garment is connected with his removal from the dwelling-place of those rejoicing and from close association with them. It is basically a question of separation from God and not sharing in His grace.

The fact that his hands and feet are bound, by order of the King, refers to a person's constriction by successions of sins which occur in this life. The unbearable pain and great suffering which the person feels when he commits them in this life will continue in the next life as well. The fact that he is cast into the outer fire indicates "his having become far from God because he did not do deeds of light here". Inasmuch as he did not practice deeds of light in this life, in that day he cannot participate in the light. Saying that he is separated from God means this. The darkness into which he will be taken is synonymous with the inextinguishable fire, the unsleeping worms, the weeping and gnashing of teeth. All these things point to "the impending unbearable sufferings touching both soul and body" and the mournful cries of useless and perpetual regret. That is to say, they will repent of the deeds they have done, but it will never be possible to be comforted, for the repentance to be brought to an end.

The passage about the coming judgment is matchless and most expressive, and since it is a teaching of Christ, it is authentic through and through. No one can doubt it and wish to be called Christian. And this because what is said about the judgment comes from the indisputable mouth of Christ (Matt. 25:31-46)....

Christ really desires the salvation of man, whom He created, and through love He has endured many sufferings for his salvation. At the same time, through holy Baptism the Christian is a member of His body. And when he does not measure up to this desire of Christ and remains in the darkness of sin, then he condemns himself....

The coming judgment is not a typical legal process but is Christ's expression and revelation of man's inner spiritual condition. He who is reborn of the Holy Spirit will then appear clearly to all men; his kinship with Christ, who will shine radiantly, will be revealed. And he who is not reborn, and especially he who has a dark and unenlightened nous, will be revealed to all men, because he will have no share in God. Just as the appearing of the sun throws light on all things, so also the coming of the true Sun of Righteousness will be a real revelation of the inner dispositions and desires of men. According to his spiritual purity a man will radiate the brightness of God. The coming of the Sun of Righteousness among men will reveal everything. This is also how the Apostle Paul's saying is understood: "...your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life appears, then you will also appear with Him in glory" (Col. 3:3-4). Another saying of the Apostle Paul is parallel: "Anything shown up by the light will be illuminated; and anything illuminated is itself a light" (Eph. 5:13).

All who have accomplished divine things in their lives will be in the light, and those who have done depraved things, as St. Symeon the New Theologian teaches, "will be in the darkness of punishments" and there will be a great gulf between them. Thus at His appearance Christ will reveal men's way of life, their whole being, what is at the depth of their heart. This revelation is eternal life and eternal hell, because the first is participation in God, and the second is connected with non-participation and non-communion with God.

What will happen in the next life, at the coming judgment, is also going on already. St. Gregory Palamas says that Christ is the Sun of Righteousness, the never setting, true and eternal light. The souls of the saints are in it now, and in the future life their bodies will be in it as well. Those who do not repent now, although they enjoy the physical, sensible sun and are comforted by the other creatures of God, are living outside the light. Then in the future life they will find themselves very far from God and will be delivered over to eternal Hell. Therefore what will be in the next life is experienced already now. So St. Symeon the New Theologian asks God to give him His grace already now, as a pledge, that he may enjoy it in the coming life: "Grant me henceforth to serve Thee, my Savior, and to receive Thy Divine Spirit, pledge of Thy kingdom and hence to enjoy Thy banquet, Thy glory, that I may see Thee, O my God, unto the ages of ages".

This is a concern of all the saints. They do not fear death, but they fear what will happen after that, especially at the Second Coming of Christ. They are not so much concerned about the time of their death as about the way in which they will depart, that is to say what will be their condition at that hour, for that will have eternal consequences.....

In the biblical-patristic tradition we also see another way in which men will be judged in the future judgment. It is said that men will be judged by the saints. We find this already in Christ's words to His disciples: "Assuredly I say to you, that in the regeneration, when the Son of Man sits on the throne of His glory, you who have followed Me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (Matt. 19:28). The Apostle Paul maintains the same thing. Reproaching the Christians for turning to worldly tribunals to solve their various affairs, he says: "Do you not know that the saints will judge the world?" (1 Cor. 6:2).

But how is this judgment known by the saints? St. Symeon answers this point as well. He says that every man, finding himself faced with eternal life and that unutterable light, will see "one who is like him and will be judged by him". All men who have lived on earth in different ways of life will be judged by other men who have lived with them in the same conditions of life. And the ones lived in accord with the will of God, the others rejected His commandments. This means that there can be no excuse that the conditions of life were difficult and that therefore they could not live according to God's ordinances.

Thus fathers will be judged by fathers, relatives and friends by relatives and friends, brothers by brothers, the rich by those who were rich, the poor by those who were poor, the married by those who have excelled in the married state, etc. When sinners look at sinners who have repented, whoremongers who have not repented see penitent whoremongers, when the kings see holy kings, etc, and in general, when each person sees that someone like himself, who had the same nature, the same hands and eyes, the same conditions of life has been saved, this will be a self-condemnation, he will have no arguments and no excuses....

In conclusion let me say that Christ will come into the world again, and this will be His Second Coming. The whole creation will be renewed, the dead will rise again, all who are alive then will be changed, and the judgment of men will follow. All these things are truths which will happen in any case, but we do not know the day and hour when they will happen. Therefore Christ exhorts us always to be ready. Just as happened with Noah's flood, where men were "eating, drinking, marrying and giving in marriage" until Noah entered the ark and then all understood that the flood had come, the same will happen at the appearing of the Son of Man. So Christ says: "Watch, therefore, for you do not know at what hour your Lord is coming" (Matt. 24:37-42). *(from johnsanidopoulos.com)*

## **Today's Epistle Lesson – Saint Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians 8:8-9:2**

Brethren, food does not commend us to God; for neither if we eat are we the better, nor if we do not eat are we the worse. But beware lest somehow this liberty of yours become a stumbling block to those who are weak. For if anyone sees you who have knowledge eating in an idol's temple, will not the conscience of him who is weak be emboldened to eat those things offered to idols? And because of your knowledge shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died? But when you thus sin against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, you sin against Christ. Therefore, if food makes my brother stumble, I will never again eat meat, lest I make my brother stumble. Am I not an apostle? Am I not free? Have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord? Are you not my work in the Lord? If I am not an apostle to others, yet doubtless I am to you. For you are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord.

## **Today's Gospel Lesson - Saint Matthew 25:31-46**

The Lord said, "When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory. All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides *his* sheep from the goats. And He will set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left. Then the King will say to those on His right hand, 'Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; I *was* naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me.' Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed *You*, or thirsty and give *You* drink? When did we see You a stranger and take *You* in, or naked and clothe *You*? Or when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?' And the King will answer and say to them, 'Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did *it* to one of the least of these My brethren, you did *it* to Me.' Then He will also say to those on the left hand, 'Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels: for I was hungry and you gave Me no food; I was thirsty and you gave Me no drink; I was a stranger and you did not take Me in, naked and you did not clothe Me, sick and in prison and you did not visit Me.' Then they also will answer, saying, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to You?' Then He will answer them, saying, 'Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did not do *it* to one of the least of these, you did not do *it* to Me.' And these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."

## A Word From the Holy Fathers

The end is drawing near, my soul, is drawing near! But you neither care nor prepare. The time is growing short. Rise! The Judge is near at the very doors. Like a dream, like a flower, the time of this life passes. Why do we bustle about in vain?

Come to your senses, my soul! Consider the deeds you have done, and bring them before your eyes, and pour out the drops of your tears. Boldly tell your thoughts and deeds to Christ, and be acquitted.

– Great Canon of St. Andrew of Crete

### **Also Commemorated: Holy Hieromartyrs of Chersón**

The Hieromartyrs Basil, Ephraim, Eugene, Elpidius, Agathodorus, Aetherius, and Capiton carried the Gospel of Christ into the North Black Sea region from the Danube to the Dniپر, including the Crimea. They were bishops of Chersón at different times during the fourth century, and they sealed their apostolic activity with martyrdom. Only Aetherius died in peace.

Long before the Baptism of Rus under Saint Vladimir, the Christian Faith had already spread into the Crimea, which in antiquity was called Tauridia and was ruled by the Roman Emperor. The beginning of the enlightenment of Tauridia is attributed to the holy Apostle Andrew the First-Called (November 30).

The Church's enemies unwillingly contributed to the further spread of Christianity. The Roman emperors often banished traitors to this area. During the first three centuries, Christians were regarded as traitors because they would not follow the state religion. In the reign of Trajan (98-117), Saint Clement, Bishop of Rome (November 25), was sent to work in a stone quarry near Chersón. There he continued his preaching, and suffered martyrdom.

The pagans inhabiting the Crimea stubbornly resisted the spread of Christianity. But the faith of Christ, through its self-sacrificing preachers, grew strong and was affirmed. Many missionaries gave their lives in this struggle. At the beginning of the fourth century a bishop's See was established at Chersón. This was a critical period when Chersón served as a base for the Roman armies which constantly passed through the area. During the reign of Diocletian (284-305), the Patriarch of Jerusalem sent many bishops to preach the Gospel in various lands. Two of them, Ephraim and Basil, arrived in Chersón and planted the Word of God there.

Later on, Saint Ephraim went to the peoples living along the Danube, where he underwent many tribulations and sorrows. He was beheaded at the start of the persecution. The preaching at Chersón was continued by Saint Basil, Saint Ephraim's companion. He set many idol-worshippers on the path of truth. Other

wayward inhabitants of the city, enraged at his activity, rose up against him. The saint was arrested, mercilessly beaten and expelled from the city.

He went to a mountain and settled in a cave, where he unceasingly prayed to God for those who had driven him out, asking that He might illumine them with the light of true knowledge. And the Lord provided the unbelievers with a miracle. The only son of an important citizen of Chersón died. The dead child appeared to his parents in a dream and said that a certain man named Basil could resurrect him from the dead by his prayers.

When the parents had found the saint and entreated him to work the miracle, Saint Basil replied that he himself was a sinful man and had not the power to raise the dead, but the Lord Almighty could fulfill their request if they were to believe in Him. For a long time the saint prayed, invoking the Name of the Holy Trinity. Then he blessed water, and sprinkled it on the dead one, who was restored to life. The saint returned to the city with honor, and many believed and were baptized.

Soon, by order of the emperor Maximian Galerius (305-311), the persecution against Christians spread with renewed force. The Christ-haters rose up also against Saint Basil. On March 7, 309 he was dragged from his house during the night. They tied him up, dragged him along the streets and beat him to death with stones and rods. The body of the saint was thrown out of the city to be eaten by dogs and birds, and for many days it was left unburied, but remained untouched. Then Christians secretly buried the body of the holy martyr in a cave.

A year after the martyrdom of Saint Basil, three of his companions, Bishops Eugene, Elpidius and Agathodorus, ceased their preaching in the Hellespont, and arrived at Chersón to continue his holy work. They endured many hardships for the salvation of human souls. All three bishops shared the fate of their predecessor: they were stoned to death by the pagans on March 7, 311.

When Constantine the Great took the throne, Bishop Aetherius was sent by emperor Constantine to Chersón from Jerusalem. At first he also encountered hostility on the part of the pagans, but the holy emperor would not tolerate acts of violence against the preacher. He issued a decree permitting the Christians of Chersón to have church services without hindrance. Through the efforts of Saint Aetherius a church was built in the city, where the saint peacefully governed his flock. Saint Aetherius journeyed to Constantinople to thank the emperor for protecting the Christians. He fell ill and died on the return trip.

The holy emperor Constantine then sent Bishop Capiton to Chersón to replace Saint Aetherius. The Christians met him with joy, but the pagans demanded a sign from the new bishop, so they might believe in the God Whom he preached. Placing all his hope on the Lord, Saint Capiton put on his omophorion and went into a

burning furnace. He prayed in the fire for about an hour, and emerged from it unharmed. "Shall anyone bind fire in his bosom, and not burn his garments?" Solomon asks (Prov. 6:27). Saint Capiton carried red-hot coals in his phelonion, yet neither his body nor his garments were scorched. Many of the unbelievers were then persuaded in the power of the Christian God. This miracle and the great faith of Saint Capiton were reported to Saint Constantine and the holy Fathers of the First Ecumenical Council (325), and they all glorified God.

After several years Saint Capiton journeyed to Constantinople on business, but the ship encountered a storm at the mouth of the Dniepr River. The local people (pagans) seized the ship and drowned all those on board, including Saint Capiton. Although this occurred on December 21, Saint Capiton is commemorated with the other hieromartyrs of Chersón on March 7. (*from oca.org*)

### **Follow Our Diocese On-Line**

**Diocesan Website:** <http://www.acrod.org>

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

**Facebook:** <https://www.facebook.com/acroddiocese>

**Twitter:** <https://twitter.com/acrodnews>

**You Tube:** <https://youtube.com/acroddiocese>

***In Your Prayers – Please Remember...*** His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch BARTHOLOMEW, His Eminence Metropolitan GREGORY, Fr. Joseph & Family, Greek Orthodox Archbishop Paul Yazigi of Aleppo, Syriac Orthodox Archbishop Yohanna Ibrahim of Aleppo, His Grace Bishop Neofitos of Nyeri & 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 & Marlena 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, Sandy Tucker, Dawn & Faith Ulmschneider, Joe & Darlene Waters, Christine, Jo, 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.)