

# SOBORNOST

## St. Thomas the Apostle Orthodox Church

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*American Carpatho-Russian Orthodox Diocese*

*ECUMENICAL PATRIARCHATE  
OF CONSTANTINOPLE*

## SERVICES

**Wednesday in Great Lent: Liturgy of  
Presanctified Gifts 7:00 PM**

**Friday: Mol. to the Cross 6:00 AM**

**Saturday: Great Vespers 5:00 PM**

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

**Divine Liturgy 10:00 AM**

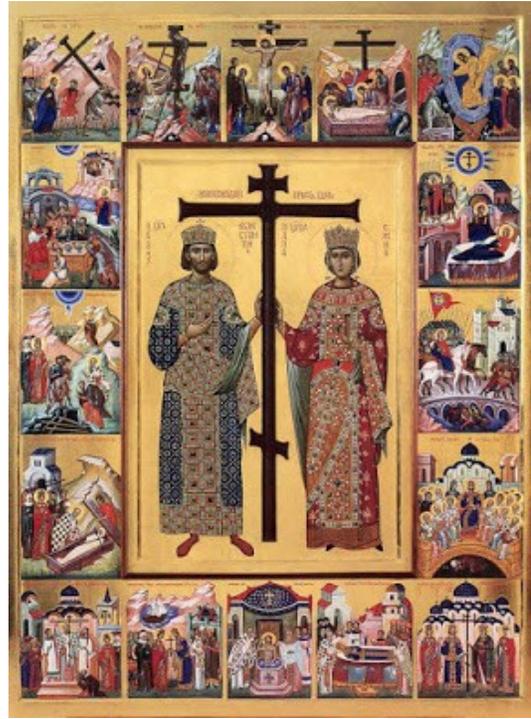
**\*Please note that attendance is currently limited by restrictions dictated by local response to the COVID-19 pandemic; if you are currently not assigned to an attendance group, please contact [outreach@apostlethomas.org](mailto:outreach@apostlethomas.org) for information on when you may attend.**

## **April 4, 2021 | Sunday of the Holy Cross (3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday in Lent)**

The Third Sunday of Great Lent Before the Seventh Century

The Third Sunday of Great Lent today maintains the most ancient liturgical practice of all the Sundays of Great Lent, dating back to the seventh century. However, before the seventh century, the Third Sunday of Great Lent was very similar to how we celebrate the First Sunday of the Triodion today. The Gospel reading before we began honoring the Veneration of the Cross was the Parable of the Publican and the Pharisee. This went along with the previous Sunday Gospel reading, which was dedicated to the Parable of the Prodigal Son, emphasizing repentance and humility, not only for the faithful, but also for the catechumens who were preparing for Holy Baptism on either Lazarus Saturday or Holy Saturday. Today only the Doxastikon of the Praises during Matins and many Idiomela remind us of the Publican and the Pharisee.

In 614, the Persian king Chosroes II sacked Jerusalem and took, along with the spoils, the relics of the True Cross which were enclosed in a gold-plated box.



However, they were recovered fourteen years later by Emperor Heraclius II (610-641) who defeated the Persians and in the spring of 629 personally carried them back to Jerusalem. The return of the True Cross to the Church of Jerusalem by the Emperor considerably enhanced the veneration of the Holy Cross.

It was about this same time that, in Jerusalem, the week of the Third Sunday of Great Lent was also dedicated to the Veneration of the Holy Cross. It should also be noted that the Orthodox Church celebrates the Discovery of the Cross by Saint Helen on March 6th, having taken place on March 6, 326. This has become a forgotten feast in the Orthodox Church, though it still celebrates it. Seeing that March 6th usually falls around the time of the Third Sunday of Great Lent, it seems that this feast was transferred to the Third Sunday since the celebration of feasts and saints on weekdays of Great Lent is forbidden by canon law due to its mournful and solemn character, and they should be transferred to the nearest Saturday or Sunday when the celebration of the Divine Liturgy is allowed.

Thus, when you take all these events into account, it becomes obvious why the Third Sunday of Great Lent is dedicated to the Holy Cross. St. Sophronios (+ 638), the holy Patriarch of Jerusalem, testified to this in a sermon delivered in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. He gave the following reasons which inspired this mid-Lent devotion to the Holy Cross: 1. To encourage the faithful in their spiritual efforts during Lent; 2. To assure them of the remission of their sins; 3. To join their sufferings to the redeeming sufferings of Jesus Christ, that they also become the partakers of His glorious resurrection. St. Sophronios also instructs for the Cross to be displayed in the middle of Lent for the faithful to venerate it (cf. Migne, P.G., 87, 3309-3316).

After the Seventh Ecumenical Synod, which convened in Nicaea in 787 A.D. and approved the veneration of icons and, particularly, the veneration of the crucifix, the exposition of the Holy Cross on the Third Sunday of Lent was introduced in Constantinople. It was liturgically enriched by the compositions of St. Theodore the Studite (+ 826) and his brother, Joseph the Studite (+ 833). The *Book of Ceremonies*, compiled by the order of the Emperor Constantine VII Porphyrogenetos, in the middle of the tenth century, describes the manner of the six-day exposition of the holy relics of the Cross for Mid-Lent Sunday which is referred to as the “Sunday of the Veneration of the Cross”; (cf. Migne, P.G., 112, 1017-1020). However, in the ninth and tenth century Typikon for Hagia Sophia, on the Third Sunday of Lent, the Church of Hagia Sophia itself was celebrated, and this was until the thirteenth century, and the Cross was venerated there on the Wednesday of the Third Week of Lent. The Typikon of the tenth century also states that the Third Sunday of Lent was the last call for catechumens to be instructed for Baptism that year, since proper time was needed for their catechesis.

In the twelfth or thirteenth century, the Veneration of the Cross became the focal point of Great Lent in Hagia Sophia, and this passed through to all the churches at this time.

According to the *Book of Ceremonies*, the six-day-long celebrations started on the Third Sunday of Lent in the skeuophylakion of the imperial palace. Between the third and sixth ode of Matins, the “three glorious and life-giving crosses”, were removed from the treasury, embalmed by the protopapas, and taken to the Nea Ekklesia, to be venerated by all. After Matins was concluded, the crosses were taken to the gallery of the church, where the clergies of the Nea and the imperial palace jointly intoned the troparia of the Crucifixion. At this time, the emperor and his co-emperors were given the opportunity to venerate and kiss the honorable and life-giving relics. Then, the three crosses were separated from each other. Accompanied by the clergy of the Nea, a deacon carried one of them back down to the main level of the church to be displayed for further veneration. The second cross was taken over by the papias of the Great Palace, who, accompanied by the palace clergy, the protopapas of the Church of Saint Stephen, and the diaitarioi of the palace, carried it in festive procession through the Heliakon [of the Chrysotriklinos] and the Chrysotriklinos into the Lausiakos, where it was displayed for the veneration by members of the senate. The cross was then taken to the Church of the Protomartyr Stephen in the Daphne palace, where it remained over night. On the following day, the papias took the relic to Hagia Sophia, where it was displayed for veneration by the faithful during the rest of the week. The third cross never left the gallery of the Nea. After noon on Friday, when public venerations had ended at Hagia Sophia, the papias and the clergy of the Nea brought the respective crosses back into the palace. Finally, between the third and sixth ode of Matins on the Fourth Sunday of Lent, the protopapas and the skeuophylax returned all crosses to the skeuophylakion. By John Sanidopoulos. (*from johnsanidopoulos.com*)

### **Today’s Epistle Lesson – St. Paul’s Letter to the Hebrews 4:14-5:6**

Brethren, seeing that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast *our* confession. For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all *points* tempted as *we are*, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need. For every high priest taken from among men is appointed for men in things *pertaining* to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins. He can have compassion on those who are ignorant and going astray, since he himself is also subject to weakness. Because of this he is required as for the people, so also for himself, to

offer *sacrifices* for sins. And no man takes this honor to himself, but he who is called by God, just as Aaron *was*. So also Christ did not glorify Himself to become High Priest, but *it was* He who said to Him: “You are My Son, today I have begotten You.” As *He* also *says* in another *place*: “You *are* a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.”

### **Today’s Gospel Lesson – Saint Mark 8:34-9:1**

At that time, when Jesus had called the people to *Himself*, with His disciples also, He said to them, “Whoever desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel’s will save it. For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul? For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him the Son of Man also will be ashamed when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels.” And He said to them, “Amen, I say to you that there are some standing here who will not taste death till they see the kingdom of God present with power.”

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

Nailed, O Lord, upon the Cross, with the divine spear You have torn up the record of Adam’s sin. Tear, then, to pieces my bonds, O Word, that I may offer You with joy and faith a sacrifice of praise: for I have come now to the acceptable season of the Fast, which You have appointed for the salvation of all (Col. 2:14, 2 Cor. 6:2, Heb. 13:15).

Shining with the radiance of fasting, Moses once beheld the glory of God. Follow his example, O my humble soul, and with acts of abstinence and prayer serve Him who for your sake stretched out His hands in love upon the Cross, granting you a share in the divine gladness.

– St. Joseph the Hymnographer, *Vespers on Thursday Evening of the Great Canon*

### **Also Commemorated Today: St Joseph the Hymnographer**

Saint Joseph the Hymnographer, “the sweet-voiced nightingale of the Church,” was born in Sicily in 816 into a pious Christian family. His parents, Plotinos and Agatha, moved to the Peloponnesos to save themselves from barbarian invasions. When he was fifteen, Saint Joseph went to Thessalonica and entered the monastery of Latomos. He was distinguished by his piety, his love for work, and his meekness; and he gained the good will of all the brethren of the monastery. He was later ordained as a priest.

Saint Gregory the Dekapolite (November 20) visited the monastery and took notice of the young monk, taking him along to Constantinople, where they settled together near the church of the holy Martyrs Sergius and Bacchus. This was during the reign of the emperor Leo the Armenian (813-820), a time of fierce iconoclast persecution. Saints Gregory and Joseph fearlessly defend-ed the veneration of holy icons. They preached in the city squares and visited in the homes of the Orthodox, encouraging them against the heretics. The Church of Constantinople was in a most grievous position. Not only the emperor, but also the patriarch were iconoclast heretics.

At that time the Roman bishops were in communion with the Eastern Church, and Pope Leo III, who was not under the dominion of the Byzantine Emperor, was able to render great help to the Orthodox. The Orthodox monks chose Saint Joseph as a steadfast and eloquent messenger to the Pope. Saint Gregory blessed him to journey to Rome and to report on the plight of the Church of Constantinople, the atrocities of the iconoclasts, and the dangers threatening Orthodoxy. During the journey, Saint Joseph was captured by Arab brigands who had been bribed by the iconoclasts. They took him to the island of Crete, where they handed him over to the iconoclasts, who locked him up in prison. Bravely enduring all the deprivations, he encouraged the other prisoners. By his prayers, a certain Orthodox bishop who had begun to waver was strengthened in spirit and courageously accepted martyrdom.

Saint Joseph spent six years in prison. On the night of the Nativity of Christ in 820 he was granted a vision of Saint Nicholas of Myra, who told him about the death of the iconoclast Leo the Armenian, and the end of the persecution. Saint Nicholas gave him a paper scroll and said, "Take this scroll and eat it." On the scroll was written: "Hasten, O Gracious One, and come to our aid if possible and as You will, for You are the Merciful One." The monk read the scroll, ate it and said, "How sweet are Thine oracles to my throat" (Ps 118/119:103). Saint Nicholas bade him to sing these words. After this the fetters fell off the saint, the doors of the prison opened, and he emerged from it. He was transported through the air and set down on a large road near Constantinople, leading into the city.

When he reached Constantinople, Saint Joseph found that Saint Gregory the Dekapolite was no longer among the living, leaving behind his disciple John (April 18), who soon died. Saint Joseph built a church dedicated to Saint Nicholas and transferred the relics of Saints Gregory and John there. A monastery was founded near the church.

Saint Joseph received a portion of the relics of the Apostle Bartholomew from a certain virtuous man. He built a church in memory of the holy apostle. He loved

and honored Saint Bartholomew, and he was distressed that there was no Canon glorifying the holy Apostle. He desired to adorn the Feast of Saint Bartholomew with hymns, but he did not dare to compose them himself. For forty days Saint Joseph prayed with tears, preparing for the Feast of the holy apostle. On the eve of the Feast the Apostle Bartholomew appeared to him in the altar. He pressed the holy Gospel to Joseph's bosom, and blessed him to write church hymns with the words, "May the right hand of the Almighty God bless you, may your tongue pour forth waters of heavenly wisdom, may your heart be a temple of the Holy Spirit, and may your hymnody delight the entire world." After this miraculous appearance, Saint Joseph composed a Canon to the Apostle Bartholomew, and from that time he began to compose hymns and Canons in honor of the Mother of God, of the saints, and in honor of Saint Nicholas, who liberated him from prison.

During the revival of the iconoclast heresy under the emperor Theophilus (829-842), Saint Joseph suffered a second time from the heretics. He was exiled to Cherson [Chersonesus] for eleven years. The Orthodox veneration of holy icons was restored under the holy empress Theodora (February 11) in 842, and Saint Joseph was made keeper of sacred vessels at Hagia Sophia in Constantinople. Because of his bold denunciation of the brother of the empress, Bardas, for unlawful cohabitation, the saint was again sent into exile and returned only after Bardas died in 867. Patriarch Photius (February 6) restored him to his former position and appointed him Father-confessor for all the clergy of Constantinople.

Having reached old age, Saint Joseph fell ill. On Great and Holy Friday, the Lord informed him of his approaching demise in a dream. The saint made an inventory of the church articles in Hagia Sophia, which were under his official care, and he sent it to Patriarch Photius.

For several days he prayed intensely, preparing for death. He prayed for peace for the Church, and the mercy of God for his soul. Having received the Holy Mysteries of Christ, Saint Joseph blessed all who came to him, and with joy he fell asleep in the Lord in 886 (some sources say in 883). The choirs of the angels and the saints, whom Saint Joseph had glorified in his hymnology, carried his soul to Heaven in triumph.

In 890, his biographer John the deacon of the Great Church wrote about the spirit and power of Saint Joseph's Canons: "When he began to write verses, then the hearing was taken with a wondrous pleasantness of sound, and the heart was struck by the power of the thought. Those who strive for a life of perfection find a respite here. Writers, having left off with their other versification, from this one treasure-trove, from the writings of Saint Joseph, began to scoop out his treasure for their own songs, or better to say, daily they scoop them out. And finally, all the people

carry it over into their own language, so as to enlighten with song the darkness of night, or staving off sleep, to continue with the vigil until sunrise. If anyone were to peruse the life of a saint of the Church on any given day, they would see the worthiness of Saint Joseph's hymns and acknowledge his glorious life. Actually, since the lives and deeds of almost every saint are adorned with praises, is not he worthy of immortal glory, who has worthily and exquisitely known how to glorify them? Now let some saints glorify his meekness, and others his wisdom, and others his works, and all together glorify the grace of the Holy Spirit, Who so abundantly and immeasurably has bestowed his gifts on him."

Most of the Canons in the MENAION are Saint Joseph's work. His name may be found in the Ninth Ode as an acrostic. He also composed many of the hymns in the PARAKLETIKE. (from oca.org)

## **CAMP NAZARETH SUMMER CAMP 2021**

*The time for Summer Camp is Rapidly Approaching!!! The clock is ticking!!*

***Pre-REGISTER ONLINE STARTING APRIL 10, 2021  
@ 6PM (Eastern Time)!!!***

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### Dates for the Summer Camping Program

**Week 1: July 18-23, 2021 (Sunday to Friday)**

New England, NY, NJ, and Florida Deaneries

**Week 2: July 25-30, 2021 (Sunday to Friday)**

Johnstown, Pocono, Southern Tier, Youngstown and Chicago Deaneries

**Week 3: August 1-6, 2021 (Sunday to Friday)**

Pittsburgh, Mid-Atlantic, Tri-State and Washington D.C. Deaneries

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**BEFORE you pre-register, please read the  
attached page carefully!!!**

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**Pre-Register Online Starting April 10, 2021 @ 6pm  
(EDT)**

Register at – [campnazareth.org](http://campnazareth.org)

Anyone interested in attending Camp MUST pre-Register between April 10, 2021 at 6pm (EST) – April 30, 2021 at 12pm (EST).

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### **VERY IMPORTANT**

Due to State limits on gathering in numbers, the total number of campers each week will be 72. This means that pre-Registration for Camp will be on a **First-Come First-Serve Basis!!** Again, the pre-Registration for our 2021 Camp will be on a **First-Come First-Serve Basis!!** All 17 and 18 year olds (Juniors and Seniors) are asked to pre-register as soon as it opens, but no later than April 12. Please pre-Register at the link above.

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### **Important Information Re: 2021 Diocesan Summer Camping Program**

For 2021 Online Registration will take place in 2 steps. The 1<sup>st</sup> step will be a Pre-registration period that will run from Saturday, April 10 (6pm EST) – Friday, April 30 (12pm EST). Anyone interested in attending Camp MUST Register DURING this time period. However, due to State limits on gathering in numbers, the total number of campers each week will be 72. This means that registration for Camp will be on a First-Come First-Serve Basis!! Again, the Registration for our 2021 Camp will be on a First-Come First-Serve Basis!! Please also note the following with regard to Registration:

1. **A camper must be 10 years old ON or BEFORE the Sunday that begins their Camping Week in order to register for Camp!!!**
2. Again, the maximum number of campers we are allowed to house at Camp is 72.
3. **You must register during the April 10-30 dates, NO EXCEPTIONS!** Once registration has concluded on April 30, no one will be able to register for Camp. No exceptions!!
4. **Again, registration will be done on a First-Come First-Serve basis.** Once we've reached the limit of 72, the rest of those registering will be put on a Waiting List. Priority will be given to our 17 and 18 year olds (Juniors and Seniors). If they pre-register during the April 10-20 period, they will automatically be given a spot even if a 10-16 year old camper registers before them. **We are asking all 17-18 year olds to register as soon as registration opens on April 10, but no later than April 12!** If a spot opens up, those on the Waiting List will be contacted, again on a First-Come First-Serve basis.

5. This initial registration will be quick. It will not require you to answer many questions. **However, pay close attention because the Registration links are separate for Boys and for Girls for each week!!**
6. Because of the number of Male and Female Counselors and the number of cabins Camp has, the maximum number of females or males attending any one week will be 40. Once that limit has been reached for males or females, the rest will be put on the Waiting List.
7. **VERY IMPORTANT: You may ONLY register for your parish's Deanery's Week at Camp!!!** You may NOT register for multiple weeks. **Again, you may ONLY register for your parish's Deanery's Week at Camp!!!** You may NOT register for multiple weeks. For example, a camper whose parish is in Pittsburgh may ONLY register for the Pittsburgh Deanery's week at Camp. A camper whose parish is in New Jersey, may ONLY register for the New Jersey Deanery's Week at Camp. **DO NOT** try to register for another week...only your parish's Deanery's Week!!! If you do not know what Deanery your parish belongs to, **ASK** your priest!! The Camp Weeks for 2021 are as follows:
  1. Week 1: July 18-23 New England, NY, NJ, and Florida Deaneries
  2. Week 2: July 25- 30 Johnstown, Pocono, Southern Tier, Youngstown, Chicago Deaneries
  3. Week 3: Aug 1- 6 Pittsburgh, Mid-Atlantic, Tri-State and Washington D.C. Deaneries
8. Once you pre-register, and you are one of the first 72 to pre-register for your Deanery's Week, Camp will email you instructions on or before May 4, including instructions for further online registration.

## Sixth Issue of SPF50 NOW AVAILABLE!!

Scripture – Prayer - Family



Thank you to all our families who have participated in the SPF50 Ministry. Together we have completed 5 of the SPF50 publications!!

**The Sixth edition of SPF50 is now available.** The reading schedule will begin on **April 4, 2021.**

We are excited to continue the NEW reading program in the sixth edition!! The NEW reading program highlights many **ESSENTIAL Biblical**

**Stories** like Creation, Noah and the Ark, the Exodus, the call of the Prophet Samuel, and many others throughout the Old and New Testaments.

If you haven't joined SPF50 yet, now is a great time to start! Make a commitment to reading Scripture and praying together with your family. Even the busiest of families can make a commitment to read from the Bible and pray together for 50 minutes a month. Don't forget to fill out the Commitment Card which is available in the SPF50 Section of the Diocesan Website, and then return the Card to your parish priest.

**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://acrod.org) and look for the SPF50 logo.**

### 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, Presbyteria 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.)