

SOBORNOST

St. Thomas the Apostle Orthodox Church

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American Carpatho-Russian Orthodox Diocese

*ECUMENICAL PATRIARCHATE
OF CONSTANTINOPLE*

SERVICES

Saturday: Confession 4:30 PM

Great Vespers 5:00 PM

Sunday: Matins (Orthros) 8:45 AM

Divine Liturgy 10:00 AM



June 13, 2021 – 7th Sunday of Pascha | Holy Fathers of the First Ecumenical Council

We celebrate the present Feast for the following reason. When our Lord Jesus Christ, Who wore our flesh, had ineffably accomplished His entire Economy, and had been restored to His Father's Throne, the Saints, wishing to show that the Son of God became truly man and that God became perfect man, ascended, and sat at the right hand of the majesty on high, and that this Synod of the Holy Fathers thus proclaimed and confessed Him to be one in essence and honor with the Father, decreed for this reason that the present Feast should fall after the glorious Ascension, exalting this assembly of so many Fathers, as it were, for proclaiming that He Who ascended in the flesh was true God and perfect man in the flesh.

This Synod took place under St. Constantine the Great, in the twentieth year of his reign. For, after the persecution of Christians had come to an end, he first ruled in Rome; but subsequently, he founded the all-blessed city that was named after him, in the year 5838 from the creation of the world; it was then that the Arian controversy began. Arius, who hailed from Libya, went to Alexandria, where he was ordained a Deacon by the Holy Hieromartyr Peter of Alexandria. Thereafter, he began to blaspheme against the Son of God, proclaiming that He was a creature, who had come into being from non-existence and was far removed from the Divine dignity, and that He was called the Wisdom and Word of God by a misuse of language.

Arius was, as he pretended, opposing the impious Sabellios, who said that the Godhead was one Person and one Hypostasis, being the Father at one time, the Son at another time, and the Holy Spirit at yet another time. When Arius uttered these blasphemies, the great Peter deposed him from the Priesthood, after beholding Christ as an infant on the Holy Table, clad in a torn garment and saying that Arius had rent it. Achillas, who succeeded Peter as Archbishop of Alexandria, reinstated Arius, in fulfillment of a promise; in addition, he ordained him a Presbyter and put him in charge of the School of Alexandria. After the repose of Achillas, Alexander became Archbishop. Finding that Arius was again uttering the same blasphemies and worse, he drove him from the Church, deposing him through a synod. As Theodoretos says, Arius taught that Christ's nature was mutable, and he was the first to vomit forth the idea that the Lord assumed inanimate and soulless flesh. Arius, having brought many over to his impiety, he writes, coöpted Eusebios of Nicomedia, Paulinos of Tyre, Eusebios of Cæsarea, and others, and proceeded against Alexander. But Alexander, sending word of his blasphemies and his deposition throughout the world, raised up many to defend himself.

Since the Church was in confusion and there appeared no remedy for this dogmatic strife, St. Constantine the Great transported the Fathers in question from every region of the inhabited earth, at public expense, to Nicæa and arrived there himself. After all the Fathers had taken their seats, only when bidden did he sit down, and not on a royal throne, but on a seat that was lower than his dignity dictated. When the charges against Arius had been read out, both Arius and those of like mind with him were placed under anathema. The Holy Fathers declared the Word of God to be one in essence, one in honor, and co-unoriginate with the Father. They also set forth the Holy Symbol of the Faith, taking it as far as the clause: "And in the Holy Spirit." The ensuing clauses were completed by the Second Ecumenical Synod. In addition to this, the First Synod determined when and how we should celebrate the Feast of Pascha, and not with the Jews, as had previously been the custom. They promulgated twenty Canons pertaining to ecclesiastical order. The Holy Equal-to-the-Apostles Constantine the Great, after everyone else, signed the Holy Symbol of Faith in red letters.

Of these holy Fathers, two hundred and thirty-two were Hierarchs, while eighty-six were Priests, Deacons, or monks; altogether three hundred and eighteen Fathers were present. The most illustrious were the following: St. Sylvester, Pope of Rome and St. Metrophanes, Patriarch of Constantinople were both ill and were present through their representatives; St. Alexander of Alexandria, together with St. Athanasios the Great, who at that time was an Archdeacon; St. Evstathios of Antioch and Patriarch Macarios of Jerusalem; St. Hosius of Cordova; St. Paphnoutios the Confessor; St. Nicholas the Myrrh-Gusher and St. Spyridon of

Trimythous, who baptized a philosopher that was there, after refuting his arguments and proving to him the threefold nature of the Godhead. Since two of the Fathers—both of them Hierarchs—had passed on to God during the course of the Synod, St. Constantine the Great, after placing copies of the definition of the Holy Synod in their respective coffins and enclosing them securely therein, found the documents confirmed and signed by them, through the ineffable command of God.

Upon the conclusion of the Synod, since the rebuilding of the Imperial City was now complete, St. Constantine summoned all of those holy men; they all came and, after praying for some time, confirmed that it was the Queen of cities and dedicated it to the Mother of the Word, by order of the Emperor. And thus each of the Saints returned home.

Since the Great Emperor Constantine had not yet departed to God, but was reigning together with his son, Constantios, Arius approached him, saying that he had abandoned all of his heresies and wished to be reunited to the Church of God. Having written down his blasphemies and hung them round his neck, pretending that he believed in the decrees of the Synod, and striking his own writings with his hand, he said that this was what he believed. At all events, the Emperor ordered the Patriarch of Constantinople to receive Arius into communion. The Patriarch at that time was Alexander, the successor of Metrophanes, who, knowing the evil of this man's ways, hesitated and besought God to show him whether it was His will that he should commune with Arius. Since the time was approaching when he would have to liturgize with him, he became more fervent in his prayer. But when Arius came to the Church, somewhere near the Column of Porphyry he felt stabbing pains in his stomach and went into a public convenience; there he burst open, and disgorged all his entrails, undergoing the same fate as Judas for his betrayal of the Word. Having sundered the Son of God from the essence of the Father, he himself was torn asunder and was found dead; and thus was the Church of God delivered from his corruption. By the intercessions of the 318 God-bearing Fathers, O Christ our God, have mercy on us. Amen. (*synaxarion, from johnsanidopoulos.com*)

Today's Epistle Lesson – The Acts of the Apostles 20:16-18, 28-36

In those days, Paul decided to sail past Ephesus, so that he would not have to spend time in Asia; for he was hurrying to be at Jerusalem, if possible, on the Day of Pentecost. From Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called for the elders of the church. And when they had come to him, he said to them: “Take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of the Lord and God which He purchased with His own blood. For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing

the flock. Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves. Therefore watch, and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears. “So now, brethren, I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified. I have coveted no one’s silver or gold or apparel. You yourselves know that these hands have provided for my necessities, and for those who were with me. I have shown you in every way, by laboring like this, that you must support the weak. And remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He said, ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’” And when he had said these things, he knelt down and prayed with them all.

Today’s Gospel Lesson – Saint John 17:1-13

At that time, Jesus spoke these words, lifted up His eyes to heaven, and said: “Father, the hour has come. Glorify Your Son, that Your Son also may glorify You, as You have given Him authority over all flesh, that He shall give eternal life to as many as You have given Him. And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent. I have glorified You on the earth. I have finished the work which You have given Me to do. And now, O Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was. “I have manifested Your name to the men whom You have given Me out of the world. They were Yours, You gave them to Me, and they have kept Your word. Now they have known that all things which You have given Me are from You. For I have given to them the words which You have given Me; and they have received *them*, and have known surely that I came forth from You; and they have believed that You sent Me. “I pray for them. I do not pray for the world but for those whom You have given Me, for they are Yours. And all Mine are Yours, and Yours are Mine, and I am glorified in them. Now I am no longer in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to You. Holy Father, keep them through Your name which You have given Me, that they may be one as *We are*. While I was with them in the world, I kept them in Your name. Those whom You gave Me I have kept; and none of them is lost except the son of perdition, that the Scripture might be fulfilled. But now I come to You, and these things I speak in the world, that they may have My joy fulfilled in themselves.

A Word From the Holy Fathers

According to your mercy, pour out upon me, who am miserable, at least one small drop of grace to make me understand and be converted, that I might make at least some small effort to correct myself. For if your grace does not illumine my soul, I will not be able to see the carelessness and negligence that the passions have produced in me through my apathy and recklessness. - St. Ephraim the Syrian

Commemorated Today: Martyr Aquilina of Byblos in Syria

The Holy Martyr Aquilina, a native of the Phoenician city of Byblos, suffered under the emperor Diocletian (284-305). Her parents raised her in Christian piety. When the girl was only twelve years old, she persuaded a pagan friend to convert to Christ. One of the servants of the imperial governor Volusian accused her of teaching others not to follow the religion of their fathers. The girl firmly confessed her faith in Christ before the governor and said that she would not renounce Him. Volusian tried to influence the young confessor through persuasion and by flattery, but seeing her confidence, he ordered her to be tortured. They struck her upon the face, then they stripped her and beat her with whips. The torturer asked, "Where then is your God? Let Him come and take you out of my hands". The saint answered, "The Lord is here with me invisibly, and the more I suffer, the more strength and endurance will He give me."

They drilled through the martyr's ears with heated metal rods. The holy virgin fell down as if dead. The torturer thought that the girl had actually died, and he gave orders to throw her body outside the city to be eaten by dogs. By night a holy angel appeared to Saint Aquilina, roused her and said, "Arise and be healed. Go and denounce Volusian, so that he and his plans may come to nothing." The martyr went to the court of the governor and stood before Volusian. Seeing Saint Aquilina, he called for his servants and ordered them to keep watch over her until morning. In the morning he sentenced Saint Aquilina to death, saying that she was a sorceress who did not obey the imperial decrees. When they led the saint to execution, she prayed and gave thanks to God for allowing her to suffer for His Holy Name.

A voice was heard in answer to her prayer, summoning her to the heavenly Kingdom. Before the executioner could carry out the sentence, the martyr gave up her spirit to God (+ 293). The executioner feared to disobey the governor's orders, so he cut off her head although she was already dead. Christians piously buried the martyr's body. Later, her relics were taken to Constantinople and placed in a church named for her. (*from oca.org*)

Finding of the Relics of Saint Nicholas of Lesvos in 1960

The Newly-Revealed Martyrs of Lesvos, Saints Raphael, Nicholas and Irene, were martyred by the Turks on Bright Tuesday (April 9, 1463) ten years after the Fall of Constantinople. They began appearing to various inhabitants of Lesvos in 1959 and revealed the details of their lives and martyrdom.

In 1451, during a meeting in the French town Morlaix, near Brest in the area of Bretagne, Raphael met a 27 year old Greek law student, Nicholas. Nicholas was born in the year 1424 and raised in Thessaloniki. His Family was comprised of his

father Georgios Konstantakis, a lawyer, his mother Anna and his sister Zoe. As recorded in his biography, the Konstantakis family had its origins in the town of Ragoi, Media in Asia Minor. In 1445, Georgios Konstantakis sent his son, Nicholas, to Morlaix, France, to study law at the local university. However, overwhelmed by material pleasures, Nicholas had been spending his time entertaining himself and enjoying social life instead of studying. Nevertheless, by collaborating with Father Raphael and influenced by his exemplary way of living and his valuable advice, he changed his way of life and, eventually became a Deacon. First he became a monk, then, because of his exemplary way of living and his passion for Orthodoxy, Father Raphael ordained him a Deacon and kept him as his assistant, assigning him tasks in different cities, to preach Orthodoxy.

In 1453, Saint Nicholas was living in Macedonia with his fellow monastic, Saint Raphael. In 1454, the Turks invaded Thrace, so the two monks fled to the island of Lesbos. They settled in the Monastery of the Nativity of the Theotokos near Thermi, where Saint Raphael became the abbot.

In the spring of 1463, the Turks raided the monastery and captured the monks. They were tortured from Holy Thursday until Bright Tuesday. Saint Raphael was tied to a tree, and the ferocious Turks sawed through his jaw, killing him. Saint Nicholas' arms had been tied behind his back; he was hung from a smaller walnut tree in the monastery's courtyard and tortured night and day by the Turks, who beat and stabbed him with their lances. Because of his frail health, Saint Nicholas did not endure the merciless tortures very long, nor the sight of his beloved Abbot Raphael being dragged on the ground and his blood splashed all over the courtyard. He too suffered a heart-attack and died. As Saint Raphael later revealed, their souls went up to Heaven together. He appeared to people near the location of his martyrdom and indicated the spot where his relics were uncovered on June 13, 1960 in Karyes. Many diseases have been reported cured by the intercession of the Saint.

The Finding of the Relics of Saint Nicholas the Deacon

Toward the end of November in 1959, Maria Tsolakis and Myrsine Dourgouna saw Saint Raphael in dreams, in which he informed them that in the left front yard, northwest of the ancient church, there was the tomb of Deacon Nicholas, who came with him to Thermi following the invasion of Thrace. He did not, however, indicate the precise spot. The exact place of the grave of Saint Nicholas was revealed in May of 1960.

In May of 1960, Myrsine Dourgouna saw Saint Raphael in a dream with another monk. Saint Raphael addressed her and said: "Myrsine, gaze now upon my Deacon Nicholas. Give heed to where his grave is located. You shall remove him on a

rainy day." Then it was as if the earth opened, and she saw the grave of Deacon Nicholas. At that moment, she also noticed the monk beside Saint Raphael had vanished. The spot was in the left front yard, northwest of the ancient church. This spot was revealed to other women also, but the wardens of the church did not want to dig there lest they find nothing and suffer reproach. From the week of Palm Sunday, more and more people were recipients of dreams. The messages were all the same; all were shown the identical spot to commence digging for Saint Nicholas' tomb.

Vasiliki Rallis had this to say: "In addition to me, the revelation was made to several inhabitants of Thermi - Maria Tsolakis, as well as the sisters Maria and Myrsine Dourgouna, and Virginia Adam (born and raised in Thermi). But we hesitated to recount it to the Metropolitan of Mytilene and to ask for his permission to commence digging. We were afraid to excavate the area lest the tomb should not be found and we become objects of derision on the part of the unbelievers. But we, finally, plucked up the courage and divulged our dreams. After hearing us, the most reverend Metropolitan gave us permission to dig. The task of excavating was assigned to Doukas Tsolakis. He was asked to dig at the spot where all of us agreed that the tomb was located, that is, according to the messages we had received in our dreams."

Doukas added to this testimony the following: "I maintained that there could not be a tomb there. Why? Simply because the terrain was sloping. But I fell in with their plan and performed a little digging, only to find that the soil was as hard as a rock. I, therefore, stopped the work that day. But later that night, I had a dream in which I was at Karyes. I soon observed a short monk. He was sitting at the spot where I had begun digging earlier that day. This monk addressed me and said, "I am Nicholas. Why do you doubt that my grave is here? Have you forgotten what Saint Raphael did to you? You shall suffer greater punishment from me!"

The following day, the 13th of June, I went and described my dream to the members of the committee, that is, to those who had commissioned me to dig. After they gave me a patient and attentive hearing, they charged me to proceed with the excavation. I, thereupon, resumed the digging. I was assisted by another workman, named Nicholas Podaras. After some difficult digging, the grave containing the skeleton of Saint Nicholas was uncovered. Thus, the 13th of June came to be a day of great rejoicing for the believers, especially those who had been following closely the events at Thermi and Karyes."

Indeed, when the grave of Saint Nicholas was discovered, it was raining, just as foretold by Saint Raphael to Myrsine Dourgouna. It was this same Myrsine, who never left the workers side during the excavation in the rain and helped by

removing mud and dirt with her hands, that was the first to cry out: "We found it!" upon the discovery. The skeleton was covered in tiles that had to be removed, and while removing them they accidentally broke the left leg. Vasiliki and Myrsine then ran to the village despite the downpour and announced the good news, bringing joy to believers, and silencing the unbelievers.

Soon after the discovery, miracles began to take place through the sacred relics of Saint Nicholas. Vasiliki Invriotou, an elderly woman of the city of Mytilene, upon venerating the relics of the Saint, recovered full use of her paralyzed arm and leg. In another case, a young woman was delivered from a serious infection. In yet another case, a man with a terminal case of tuberculosis was cured at Ayiassos the moment his wife prayed for the recovery at Karyes. The latter healing was confirmed by physicians by means of x-rays before and after the instant cure.

On the day of the discovery, Doukas Tsolakis and Nicholas Podaras remained on guard at the tomb, in company of some women. When they became exhausted, they retired to their homes to sleep, but it became impossible, because in the night they could hear the peal of a church bell from afar, sounding mournful as it does on Great Friday of Holy Week. One of the church wardens also heard the bell. Meanwhile, the following afternoon, Melanthia Voulgarellis, who was one of the unbelievers, before she lay down to take a nap, beheld Saint Nicholas. He was standing upright before her, wrapped in his cassock which was tied with a string. He said: "I am not a Turk, but a saint. The Christians, out of their fear, had buried me hastily. They did not have time to sew me within my cassock. Instead, they placed me in the cassock and wrapped it about me with a string." The Saint then told her that he would work miracles so that the world might believe. Saint Nicholas then departed, and Melanthia went to the Metropolitan and told him what she had heard. He was impressed that an uneducated woman would know of this monastic custom of sewing monastics within their cassocks upon death, confirming that it was indeed revealed to her by Saint Nicholas. *(from johnsanidopoulos.com)*

Message from Fr. Joseph

Prayer is powerful, and we need more priests in our Diocese. So, until the end of the year, Metropolitan Gregory is asking that each one of us pray daily that we have more vocations to the priesthood. He also wants us to pray by name for our clergy and seminarians--they aren't sick! The clergy that we are to pray for are: Fr. William Conjelko, Fr. Vincent Dranginis, and Deacon Edward Brisbane. The seminarians are: Dylan Kelemencz, Thomas Kovalak, Nicholas Worobey, and Aydin Zill. As I recall, we did something like this years ago and much fruit was produced. I can't wait to see what happens!

Prayer for vocations

Master of all, You promised us, “I will be with you always, even until the very end of the world,” and You have taught, “I will build My Church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” Mindful of this pledge, we beseech Your great goodness to inspire men to the Holy Priesthood, the service of Your Holy Orthodox Church, so that she may properly be able to fulfill Your will for Your people in this age. There are children to baptize, the sick to heal, and the dying to care for. There is the Bread of Life to distribute, and the Word of God to teach. There are sins to forgive, and charity to be done in Your Name. Send Your Church in this hour and in every age “vessels of clay” to be instruments of Your presence. Hear us, O Lord, and have mercy.

Prayer for the priesthood

O Lord Jesus Christ, Good Shepherd of Your sheep, light the fire of ardent love in the hearts of all Your priests, that they may ever and in all things seek only Your glory. Remember especially, Lord, our Metropolitan Gregory, and our spiritual father Joseph, who are laboring in Your vineyard for the salvation of all those whom You have entrusted to them. Remember also, O Lord, our priests Fr. William Conjelko, Fr. Vincent Dranginis, and Deacon Edward Brisbine, and seminarians Dylan Kelemencz, Thomas Kovalak, Nicholas Worobey, and Aydin Zill. Make their lives as holy as the word they preach. Keep them from being discouraged. Hear their prayers for our salvation. Give them wisdom and courage to proclaim Your truth. Make them priests after Your own heart. For You are a merciful God who loves us, and to You we give glory, together with Your eternal Father and Your all-holy, good and life-giving Spirit, now and ever and forever. Amen.

Social Team for June 20

Team 3 is up next week – Edgington, Kish, Barzykin, R&C Wright. Thank you!

Deacon Stephen Hall – Memory Eternal!

As we mourn the passing of our beloved Deacon Stephen Hall, who reposed on Ascension Day, June 10, 2021, we are encouraged by the grace of this festal season and strengthened by the divine services to be offered for him. Deacon Stephen was received into Holy Orthodoxy and ordained to the diaconate in our parish, and was an integral part of it for many years before retiring to the Eastern Shore in 2013.

The schedule and arrangements are as follows:

Tuesday, June 15

*All services on this day will be in **Berlin, MD** at Christ the Savior Orthodox Church: 10315 Carey Road; Berlin, MD 21811*

5:00pm Viewing in the chapel with light refreshments in the fellowship hall
7:00pm Memorial

Thursday, June 17

*All services on this day will be in Johnstown, PA at Christ the Saviour Cathedral:
300 Garfield St, Johnstown, PA 15906*

9:00am Viewing

10:00am Funeral, followed by burial at Grandview Cemetery and a repast meal at a location TBA

Our deepest sympathies are with Deacon Stephen's beloved wife, Nissa Nancy Hall, and their entire family. May the Lord grant them His comforting and consoling grace!

Nissa Nancy and their family request that in lieu of flowers, donations be made to Christ the Savior Orthodox Church in Berlin, MD in memory of Deacon Stephen.

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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, the newly reposed servant of God Deacon Stephen Hall, and those in need of our prayers. (Please advise Fr. Joseph of changes.)