

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

www.apostlethomas.org

American Carpatho-Russian Orthodox Diocese

*ECUMENICAL PATRIARCHATE
OF CONSTANTINOPLE*

SERVICES

**Wednesday: Moleben to the
Theotokos 6 AM**

Friday: Moleben to the Cross 6 AM

Saturday: Confession 4:30 PM | Great Vespers 5:00 PM

Sunday: Matins (Orthros) 8:45 AM | Divine Liturgy 10:00 AM

June 12, 2022 – Holy Pentecost

We live in a modern Babylon. Never mind the towers of glass and steel looming over our cities, which would have been the marvel and envy of Babel's builders. They are only emblematic of a deeper reality, of the impulse that propels our society and likens us spiritually to the architects of Babel—man's arrogant attempt, by his own efforts and ingenuity, to mount the heavenly heights from which he was banished. In the name of progress, freedom, justice, humanity, love, and compassion, we go about relentlessly refashioning the world into a society of self-divinized man-gods, liberated from the constraints of nature, religion, class, and culture, free to choose our own identity, free to be whoever we want to be.

For the same sin as the Babylonians, we receive the same punishment. The more we strive humanly, without God, for a world of peace, harmony, and justice, free from hate, fear, and intolerance, the more confused and divided we become. Is there any shortage today of labels we assign ourselves and others in order to separate ourselves from one another? Left and Right, progressive and conservative, Democrat and Republican, Trumpers and Never Trumpers, maskers and anti-maskers, vaxxers and anti-vaxxers, pro-choicers and pro-lifers, racists and wokesters. Even within the Church, we're not immune to it—Greeks and Russians, Old Calendarist and New Calendarist, traditionalist and modernist, fundamentalist and ecumenist. That's not to say that every difference of opinion is trivial; but such



simplistic dichotomies often obscure more nuanced realities. When we divide the world into opposing camps, we imagine that we are on the right side and dismiss others as unworthy of consideration. The temptation may seem negligible, but it gradually hardens our hearts and blinds us to the image of God in our fellow man. Iniquity abounds, and the love of many grows cold.

Of course, disagreements are nothing new. Yet something fundamental has been lost. Our curse is slightly different than the one inflicted on the builders of Babel. We can overcome the divinely imposed barriers of language with Google Translate, and communicate with anyone on the planet. But even when we speak the same language, we fail to understand one another. We talk past one another. Our words mean different things to each of us because we have lost shared values, shared ideals, shared experiences, common life, communion—*koinonia*, the hallmark of the apostolic Church. Instead, we immerse ourselves in the simulacrum of connection afforded by social media. We are barraged with a constant stream of babble, bombarded with an endless string of baubles. All the vain jangling distracts us, while our families, our neighborhoods, our schools, and our churches disintegrate and descend into confusion.

As we enter the season of Pentecost, the Church presents us with an alternative vision. She gives us the opportunity to experience anew the descent of the Holy Spirit among us. Again we take up the familiar prayer, unsaid since Pascha: “O Heavenly King, Comforter, Spirit of Truth...” We ask Him Who is everywhere present and filling all things to abide in us, to dwell in our midst and make His home in our hearts. We say it so often that we forget what it means. It ought to give us pause, for it tells us that there is only one place where the omnipresent God can be absent—in us.

This would be a calamity not only for us, but for the whole world as well. Christ is risen and ascended. He now dwells bodily in heaven. He is only fully present in the world through His Spirit, which He pours out upon His disciples, uniting them to Himself and one another in one Body. The body of the world is destined for death and dissolution. As St. Justin Popovich says, humanity without Christ is but a string of corpses. The only hope for the world is, and always has been, for Christians to remain faithfully united to Christ, for them to acquire His Spirit. St. Seraphim famously said, “Acquire the Spirit of Peace, and a thousand souls around you will be saved.” If the repentance of one person has such far-reaching spiritual consequences, what would happen if two people acquired the Spirit of Peace? A whole family? An entire parish? A diocese? A nation?

Regardless of the times and circumstances of our lives, our goal as Christians remains unchanging. Neither apocalyptic fears nor utopian fervor will avail us in

the current moment. If there is any hope of reversing the social fragmentation of our country, or of overcoming the grievous disunity of Orthodox Christians in this land, it is only through our acquisition of the Spirit of Peace. May our risen Lord richly shed abroad His Spirit in your hearts, and fill them with the peace of Pentecost in these uncertain times. Amen. *(from holycross.org)*

Today's Epistle Lesson – The Acts of the Apostles 2:1-11

When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and *one* sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. And there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men, from every nation under heaven. And when this sound occurred, the multitude came together, and were confused, because everyone heard them speak in his own language. Then they were all amazed and marveled, saying to one another, "Look, are not all these who speak Galileans? And how *is it that* we hear, each in our own language in which we were born? Parthians and Medes and Elamites, those dwelling in Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya adjoining Cyrene, visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabs—we hear them speaking in our own tongues the wonderful works of God."

Today's Gospel Lesson – Saint John 7:37-52, 8:12

On the last day, that great *day* of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water." But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet *given*, because Jesus was not yet glorified. Therefore many from the crowd, when they heard this saying, said, "Truly this is the Prophet." Others said, "This is the Christ." But some said, "Will the Christ come out of Galilee? Has not the Scripture said that the Christ comes from the seed of David and from the town of Bethlehem, where David was?" So there was a division among the people because of Him. Now some of them wanted to take Him, but no one laid hands on Him. Then the officers came to the chief priests and Pharisees, who said to them, "Why have you not brought Him?" The officers answered, "No man ever spoke like this Man!" Then the Pharisees answered them, "Are you also deceived? Have any of the rulers or the Pharisees believed in Him? But this crowd that does not know the law is accursed." Nicodemus (he who came to Jesus by night, being one of them) said to them, "Does our law judge a man before it

hears him and knows what he is doing?" They answered and said to him, "Are you also from Galilee? Search and look, for no prophet has arisen out of Galilee." Then Jesus spoke to them again, saying, "I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life."

A Word From the Holy Fathers

Through the Holy Spirit comes our restoration to paradise, our ascension into the kingdom of heaven, our return to the adoption of sons, our liberty to call God our Father, our being made partakers of the grace of Christ, our being called children of light, our sharing in eternal glory, and, in a word, our being brought into a state of all "fulness of blessing," both in this world and in the world to come, of all the good gifts that are in store for us, by promise hereof, through faith, beholding the reflection of their grace as though they were already present, we await the full enjoyment.

– St. Basil the Great

Also Commemorated Today: Ven. Onuphrius the Great

Saint Paphnutius, who led an ascetical life in the Thebaid desert in Egypt, has left us an account of Saint Onuphrius the Great and the Lives of other fourth century hermits: Timothy the Desert Dweller, the abbas Andrew, Charalampus, Theophilus, and others.

It occurred to Saint Paphnutius to go to the inner desert in order to see if there were a monk who labored for the Lord more than he did. He took a little bread and water and went into the most remote part of the desert... On the seventeenth day Saint Paphnutius reached a hilly place and sat down to rest. Here he caught sight of a man approaching him, who was covered from head to foot with white hair and girded his loins with leaves of desert plants. The sight of the Elder frightened Abba Paphnutius, and he jumped up and fled up the hill. The Elder sat down at the foot of the hill. Lifting his head, he saw Saint Paphnutius, and called him to come down. This was the great desert-dweller, Abba Onuphrius. At the request of Saint Paphnutius, he told him about himself.

Saint Onuphrius had lived in complete isolation in the wilds of the wilderness for sixty years. In his youth he had been raised at the Eratus monastery near the city of Hermopolis. Having learned from the holy Fathers about the hardships and lofty life of the desert-dwellers, to whom the Lord sent help through His angels, Saint Onuphrius longed to imitate their exploits. He secretly left the monastery one night and saw a brilliant ray of light before him. Saint Onuphrius became frightened and

decided to go back, but the voice of his Guardian Angel told him to go into the desert to serve the Lord.

After walking six or seven miles, he saw a cave. At that moment the ray of light vanished. In the cave was an old man. Saint Onuphrius stayed with him to learn of his manner of life and his struggle with demonic temptations. When the Elder was convinced that Saint Onuphrius had been enlightened somewhat, he then led him to another cave and left him there alone to struggle for the Lord. The Elder visited him once a year, until he fell asleep in the Lord.

At the request of Saint Paphnutius, Abba Onuphrius told him of his labors and ascetic feats, and of how the Lord had cared for him. Near the cave where he lived was a date-palm tree and a spring of pure water issued forth. Twelve different branches of the palm tree bore fruit each month in succession, and so the monk endured neither hunger nor thirst. The shade of the palm tree sheltered him from the noonday heat. An angel brought Holy Communion to the saint each Saturday and Sunday, and to the other desert-dwellers as well.

The monks conversed until evening, when Abba Paphnutius noticed a loaf of white bread lying between them, and also a vessel of water. After eating, the Elders spent the night in prayer. After the singing of the morning hymns, Saint Paphnutius saw that the face of the venerable Onuphrius had become transformed, and that frightened him. Saint Onuphrius said, "God, Who is Merciful to all, has sent you to me so that you might bury my body. Today I shall finish my earthly course and depart to my Christ, to live forever in eternal rest." Saint Onuphrius then asked Abba Paphnutius to remember him to all the brethren, and to all Christians.

Saint Paphnutius wanted to remain there after the death of Abba Onuphrius. However, the holy ascetic told him that it was not God's will for him to stay there; he was to return to his own monastery instead and tell everyone about the virtuous lives of the desert-dwellers. Having then blessed Abba Paphnutius and bid him farewell, Saint Onuphrius prayed with tears and sighs, and then he lay down upon the earth, uttering his final words, "Into Thy hands, my God, I commend my spirit," and died.

Saint Paphnutius wept and tore off a portion of his garment, and with it covered the body of the great ascetic. He placed it in the crevice of a large rock, which was hollow like a grave, and covered it over with a multitude of small stones. Then he began to pray that the Lord would permit him to remain in that place until the end of his life. Suddenly, the cave fell in, the palm tree withered, and the spring of water dried up. Realising that he had not been given a blessing to remain, Saint Paphnutius set out on his return journey. *(from oca.org)*



Holy Martyr Antonina of Nicaea

The Holy Martyr Antonina was from the city of Nicaea, which in Turkish is called Iznik, who during the reign of Emperor Maximian (286-305) stood before this emperor and confessed Christ, for which she became subject to various torments and imprisoned.

Then she was taken out of prison, and after refusing to sacrifice to idols she was made to be hung up and torn at her sides. While suffering such things, the blessed one derided the deities of the Greek pagans and the erring ways of the emperor. For this she was delivered to her torturers, who were told to unclothe her and harshly beat her. When the torturers approached her to unclothe her, straightway Angels descended from Heaven and hit the torturers harshly, pushing them back, thus keeping the Saint from harm.

After these things she was placed on a lit grill. Because she came out of this unharmed by the grace of Christ, she was placed in a sack and thrown into the lake of Nicaea, and so the glorious one received the crown of martyrdom. (*from johnsanidopoulos.com*)

Social Team for June 12

Team 6 is up next week - Cooper, M. Blaydoe, Roberta Corson, Mary V. Thank you!

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, His Grace Bishop Neofitos of Nyeri & Mt. Kenya, Bennett family, Tatyana & Slava Chumak & family, Luke & Marlena Cooper, Roberta Corson, Jon Church, Tina Crull, Mary Diane David, Marlene Doukas, Linda A. Georgiev, Sandi Hebel, Howl family, Helen P. Janowiak, John M. Janowiak, Andrew Kinn, Kopan family, Helen, Brian, Luke and Mia Mahony, Valentina Makowelski, Susan Matula, Anna Meinhold, David & Kathryn Newman, Bobby Nutter & family, Nicholas Pavlik, Weston Perry & family, John Reece, Mary Reed, Marge Rusnak, Rose Song, Dcn. Nectarios & Ia, Mother Virginia Marie & the Carmelite Nuns of Port Tobacco, the suffering people of Ukraine, and those in need of our prayers. (Please advise Fr. Joseph of changes.)