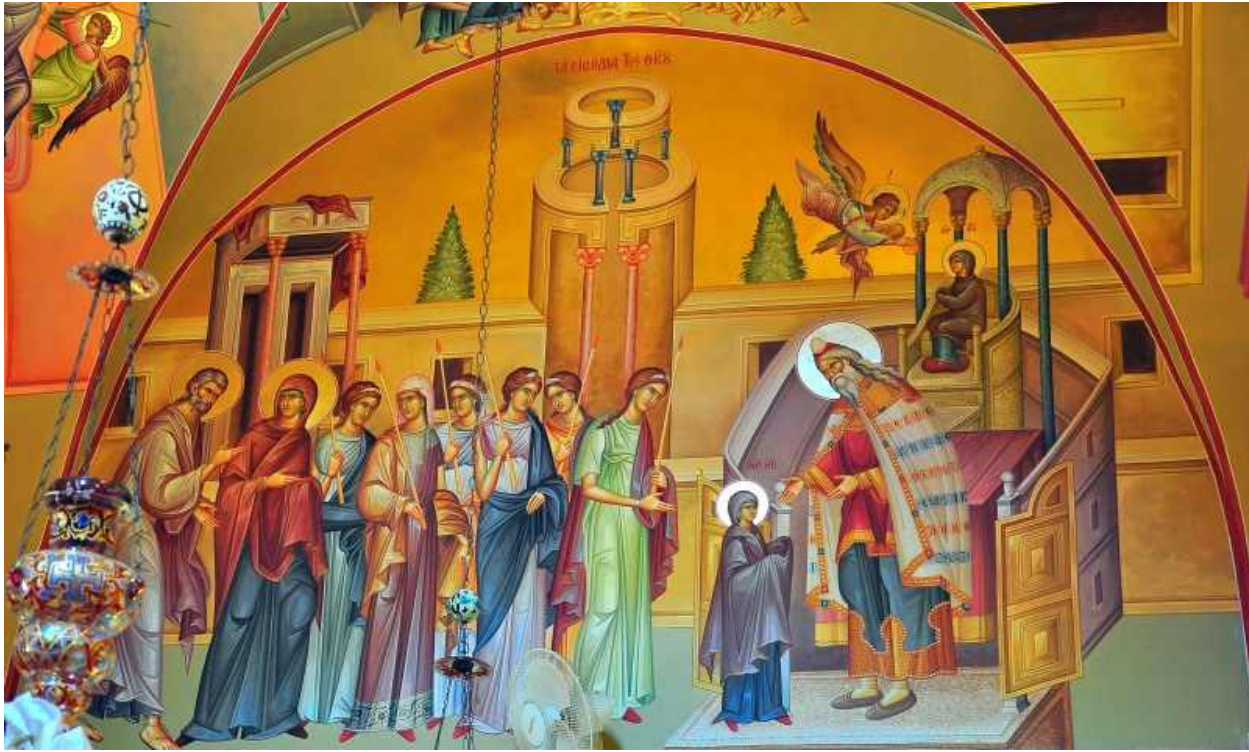


# SOBORNOST

**St. Thomas the Apostle Orthodox Church**



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**Waldorf, MD 20601**

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**Pastor**

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## SERVICES

***Wednesday: Lay Vespers 6:30 PM***

***Saturday: Confession 4:30 PM,***  
***Great Vespers 5:00 PM***

***Sunday: Matins (Orthros) 8:45 AM***  
***Sunday School 9:30 AM***  
***Divine Liturgy 10:00 AM***

## **November 20, 2022 – 23<sup>rd</sup> Sunday After Pentecost** **Forefeast of the Entrance of the Theotokos into the Temple**

History of the Feast of the Entrance of the Theotokos into the Temple

By John Sanidopoulos

The Feast of the Entrance of our All Holy Lady the Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary into the Temple, which is called the Presentation of the Virgin Mary in the West, is believed to not be among the most ancient festivals of the Church. However, indications that the feast was observed in the fourth century are found in the traditions of Palestinian Christians, which say that the Empress Helen (May 21)

built a church in honor of the Entrance of the Most Holy Theotokos into the Temple, though there is no evidence for this. Gregory of Nyssa, in the fourth century, also mentions the Entrance of the Holy Virgin, along with Jerome, Gregory the Theologian, Epiphanius of Salamis, Proclus, Andrew of Crete, John of Damascus and other Church Fathers, though it is not mentioned in any way as a festival of the Church until the eighth or ninth century, perhaps due to the rise of the influence of monasticism in the liturgical life and in the lives of Christians at this time, since the Entrance presents the Theotokos as a monastic attaining the heights of the spiritual life alone in the temple. Germanos I, Patriarch of Constantinople from 715 to 730, wrote two homilies for the feast. Tarasios (+ 806), the Patriarch of Constantinople, introduced it at Constantinople a century later as an official feast, though it had already been celebrated (this reintroduction may have been due to the first wave of Iconoclasm having passed). George of Nicomedia (9th cent.) wrote three sermons on the subject which address every detail of the feast, including a beautiful homily which addresses rhetorically the temple itself; he also composed hymns for the feast together with Leo Magister. It was celebrated in the monasteries of Southern Italy by the ninth century as well. The first calendar to describe the Feast as the Εἴσοδος τῆς Παναγίας Θεοτόκου (Entry of the All-Holy Theotokos) was in the *Menologion of Basil II*, an 11th-century menology of the Eastern Roman Emperor Basil II.

The festival blossomed forth from the Tradition of the Church, which made use of the second century apocryphal source, the *Protoevangelium of James*, as a number of our Marian feasts do, in order to emphasize the fulfillment of the economy of the Creator and the self-consecration of the chosen Virgin to a life in the service of God. The Church breaks the silence of the canonical Gospels that we may behold the incomprehensible ways of Providence which prepare Mary, the receptacle of the Word and the Mother predetermined before the ages. She who was preached by the prophets is now introduced into the Holy of Holies, like a hidden treasure of the glory of God, in anticipation of the fact that like the Holy of Holies her womb will contain God Himself. Thus "God has sanctified all things by her entry and has made godlike the fallen nature of mortal men" (Vespers Sticheron).

Historically the feast is said to have originated as a result of the dedication of the Basilica of Saint Mary the New, having been consecrated on 20 November 543, and built by Emperor Justinian I near the site of the ruined Temple of Solomon in Jerusalem. The proximity to the Temple may have brought the event of the Entrance of the Theotokos to mind. This basilica was destroyed by the Sassanid Persians under Khosrau II after the Siege of Jerusalem (614). However, the association between the consecration of this basilica and the celebration of the Feast of the Entrance seems to have been proven false, as there is no documented

proof that this is the case in any of the calendars of the time, though it may have had a later influence in determining the date of the feast to November 21st. Even when Sophronios of Jerusalem mentions the Entrance in his homily dated between 634 and 638, he does not do it as a separate feast, but in a homily delivered for the Feast of the Annunciation. This suggests that the feast was not yet established in Jerusalem as an independent celebration.

A homily specifically dedicated to the Entrance was not made until Germanos I of Constantinople some time between 715 and 730, suggesting the feast was established first in Constantinople around this period. According to Theodore Balsamon in the 1100's, the Entrance was celebrated for the first time in Constantinople in 730. The fact that the next homily we have about the Entrance was made by Patriarch Tarasios in the late eighth or early ninth century strongly indicates that it originated in the eighth century in Constantinople. The association of the feast with the consecration of the Basilica of Saint Mary the New in Jerusalem is probably a connection made later, looking back into history, as there is no documentation that supports the association. As Lafontaine-Dosogne has shown, the first clear instance of the feast being designated for celebration on November 21 is found only in the 9th century cod. 2 at Saint Andrew's Skete (Mount Athos), while the Palestinian calendar does not mention the date until the tenth century.

Nevertheless, this does not mean that the event of the Entrance would not have been celebrated as a part of other Marian festivities at an even earlier date. The earliest celebration in the honor of the Theotokos is the "Synaxis of Mary" on December 26th, dating from the early fifth century Constantinopolitan calendar. In Jerusalem, however, the most important early festivities in honor of the Theotokos were concentrated around August 15th, a date that was eventually connected with the Dormition of the Theotokos, the most significant Marian feast in the contemporary Orthodox Church. These celebrations were later expanded to a five-day celebration, which allowed the commemoration of several events in the Theotokos's life, including the Entrance. Thus, it would be logical to assume that the celebration of the Entrance as a separate feast started in Jerusalem, but, as mentioned earlier, this hypothesis is as yet unsupported by direct evidence.

The hymnography intended for the feast of the Entrance does not precede the homiletic texts for the feast, but the events of the Entrance are mentioned in the kontakion of the Nativity of the Theotokos (September 8) by Romanos the Melodist. The hymn suggests that the celebration of the Entrance themes is connected with the feast of the Nativity of the Theotokos, which would logically place the feast after September 8th and before December 25th, which celebrates the birth of Christ. (*from johnsanidopoulos.com*)

## **Today's Epistle Lesson – St. Paul's Letter to the Ephesians 2:4-10 EOB**

Brethren, God who is rich in mercy, on account of his great love by which he loved us, even when we were dead through our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ. By grace you have been saved! God raised us up with him, and granted us to sit with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the ages to come, he might show the overflowing treasure of his grace in kindness toward us, in Christ Jesus. Yes, by grace you have been saved through faith, not by yourselves. It is the gift of God, not of works, so that no one would boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared in advance for us to walk in them.

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

At that time, Jesus told them a parable, saying, "The ground of a certain rich man produced in abundance. He thought to himself, 'What will I do? I do not have room to store my crops!' Then the man said, 'This is what I will do: I will pull down my barns, build bigger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. Then I will say to my soul, "Soul, you have many goods stored up for many years. Take your ease, eat, drink, and be merry!"' But God said to him, 'You fool! Tonight your soul is demanded of you. The things which you have prepared, to whom will they belong?' This is how it is when someone amasses treasure for himself but is not rich toward God."

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

Very great are the riches of the nourishment of the wisdom of the grace of God. Numberless are the benefits of the gathering together of spiritual beings. Honorable is the merchandise of the market of the Church. Joyful is the festival before the altar. Exceedingly splendid is the profit of the traffic with the Savior. Indescribable are the ungrudged riches of the nails of the Savior. Great is the pleasure of the gifts which appertain to the beings of heaven.

This love does not know poverty, for it is Christ Who gives this charity. And if you wish, O beloved, and will look into the Holy Scriptures, you will have knowledge of the riches which are immeasurable and shall understand that He gives great gives. For He wishes to make you to know this with careful exactness, and the forms and ways in which He does this are various; for from the beginning our Lord Jesus Christ has not ceased to do good to the race of men.

Having banished the first man, that is to say, Adam, to the place of one who has been condemned to punishment, He took him and seated him with Him upon the throne in the heavens. He saw Abel when he killed him for a sacrifice, and after his death He made Himself the accuser of his murderer in converse with him. He

saw Noah being punished by the waters of the Flood, and He protected him like a star among the race of men. He found Abraham when he was a sojourner in a strange land, and He made him the father of all nations. He also saw Joseph when he was in fetters, and He raised him up to be an image of chastity to the world. He saw Moses who had fled from Egypt, and He made him to be the guide of a people that was without number.

Joshua, the son of Nun, was a spy in the country of Palestine, and He curbed the course of the sun and the moon from him. He took David from a flock of sheep, and made him king of his race, and the father of the Awful Mystery. He caused Balaam not to hearken to the donkey, and He made the animal to become a reasoning creature instead of a speechless brute. In order to make it a useful thing He bestowed reasoning power on the Red Sea. He made the rod of Aaron to shoot forth new blossoms, contrary to its nature. He set up a serpent of brass in the desert, like a physician of marvelous powers. He saw Elijah as he fled, and He took him up and made him an inhabitant of heaven.

He made the flame of the furnace which was in Babylon become cool for the Three Children. He made the lions which were in the pit become like ready disciples of Daniel. He made the belly of the whale in the sea to become like the bridal bed of the prophet (Jonah). He made the brothel of Rahab to be changed into an orderly hostel for the reception of strangers.

My tongue, however, will not suffice for the narration of all His works of goodness, for the wealth of His working power overcomes my tongue. Now the festival of the Church is full of benefits of every kind for our salvation, according to that which is written, "Every good gift and every perfect gift are from heaven, and they come down through the Father of Light." (James 1:17)

In this world He gives those which are on the earth, (and) those which are in the heavens. In this world He is the maker of sufferings (i.e., vices), and He makes men to acquire virtues. In this world the offering is made with material possessions, and the market-place is quiet—I speak of the Church. In this world the clouds give rain through the waters of the Gospel. In this world there are the trumpets of the Apostles, and the preaching of the Trinity uncreated. In this world spiritual hymns fight against the tyranny of the passions which exist in our intellectual members. In this world Adam is naked on the earth, and we clothe ourselves in the Light which is from heaven, our Lord Jesus Christ. In this world we overthrow the ancient tyrant, and we adore the Mystery, which is of the Virgin. In this world the note of hand of our sins is torn up, and a contract of freedom is delivered unto us. In this world passion is killed, and our soul is made to live again.

O festival, the place of which is upon the earth, and the benefit of which is in heaven! In this world are preached with a loud voice the useful medicines of the fast of the holy Forty Days, and the great reward of continence, and the angelic character of virginity, and the almsgiving which is accepted, and the gentle disposition, and the quantity of blessing, and the meekness which is without limit, and the longsuffering which is like unto that of God, and the immeasurable patience which cannot be submerged and the character of not seeking to pry into faith, (and into) the Uncreatedness of the Trinity, and into the incomprehensibility of the dispensation of the flesh.

But if you attempt to inquire deeply into the matter, by means of your power of reasoning powers, you will find that this glorious miracle is wholly beyond all investigation whatsoever.

Now the intellect of man does not have the ability to discover by inquiry by what means God became man, and in what way God, Who is impassible, and is One, and is, moreover, not of the earth, took form to Himself in the flesh. He Who Is has no beginning. Out of the Father, without change is He Who hath come into being in the last days, and hath made Himself manifest in the Virgin. He Who Is is uncreated. He Who has come into being is not a phantom for He is God in truth, and man in truth. He is of like substance with the Father, and He is the same as I am, so far as my birth is concerned, according to that [portion of Him] which is create, with the exception of sins. (Baruch 3:37)

The Nature of God is uncreated, and that Nature which He has taken with me is not false, but is indeed the same (as mine). We do not divide the Natures into two Persons, but the two natures are one Person, and proceed from the divinity and manhood of the economy of the Son, which makes them to become one of one with Him. As the result of the oneness, which it is impossible to describe, He becomes the Only-begotten Son.

The heretics think mad this view, and the Jews break their minds, or hearts, concerning it, and the Greeks, or Heathen, cut themselves off from us. The Son cannot be separated from the Father, and yet He was nourished like men. (2 Cor.

5:21; Heb. 4:15) He took upon Himself flesh (John 1:14) without change. He took the whole of man, (and) was not divided. He, the whole of Him, is in heaven; and He, the whole of Him, is on the earth; and He, the whole of Him, is in every place for the Nature of God cannot be divided. In that wherewith He clothed Himself (i.e., the flesh), He endured sufferings patiently, but He freed me from sufferings by means of that flesh which He took upon Himself.

We call Him the Son of God, because He is God the Word in very truth, and because He is the wisdom and the intelligence (or, mind) which are inseparable

from the Father according to His nature (even as the two animals which are yoked together and are driven by the charioteer), God and man.

For He is the strength of His Father, therefore is He is the Protector of all the things which have come into being. He is the Truth, therefore is He the distinguishing Mark of the Father. He is the Image of Him, therefore is He the same Substance, and He it is Whom the Father has begotten without change. He is the Light, therefore is He the Sun of our souls. He is the Life, therefore we live in Him, and we exist and we move (Acts 17:28) through Him. He is Justice, therefore He it is Who gives to each and every one according to his merit. He is Holiness, therefore is He the Slayer of sin. He is Salvation, therefore it is He Who has purchased the whole world with His Blood. He is the Resurrection, therefore it is He Who has set free those who are in the tomb, and has made them new a second time by His Blood.

But you say, O Jew, 'Declare unto me other things.' I tell you, O Jew, that I am not ashamed to declare them with a loud voice, for my salvation is the economy of the Son. For He Who Is exists of and by Himself and He Who Himself has become created (in other words, has become flesh), has Himself become thus for my sake. And He worked miracles as God, and He bore patiently very many sufferings as a man.

That He Himself, therefore, became created was due to His commiseration for me. Because He was a man He took (upon Himself flesh) in truth though surely He was the leaven of the bread. For this reason He became a son of man for in truth He took flesh from a woman without a husband. For He is the Way, therefore He is the Guide to His Father. Next He is the Door, therefore He is the Guide into Paradise. He is the Shepherd, therefore He is the Seeker after the sheep which is lost. He is the Sheep, therefore they slew Him on behalf of the whole world. He is the Lamb, therefore He is the cleanser of the world from its impurity. For His administration (or, economy) is beyond compare, and His Nature is unchangeable.

He is the high priest, therefore He offered Himself up for us. He is the God who Is. In that He was without mother, He was superior to our nature; in that he was without ancestors among us He appertained not to us in our nature. His generation has never been recorded in any form, or in any place whatsoever. The inhabitants of heaven cannot utter it; the dwellers upon the earth cannot declare it, and in no place whatsoever can any interpret it. For He took body, and soul, and mind (or, intelligence), in order that through them He might be able to deliver us from death.

Be ashamed, then, O Jew, because of the sufferings which He endured on your behalf, and the miracles which He performed for your sake. But you, the new Jew, will say, 'What are the miracles which He performed?' And I, even I, will say unto

you,'What are the miracles which He has performed on your behalf, you striver against God, in comparison with those which He has performed for us? Which of these miracles is greater? Which of them make you to wonder most concerning them? Which is the greater miracle? The heavens raining down bread, or God taking upon Himself flesh? Which is the greater miracle? The sea which became divided that you might pass through it, or the Virgin who ceased not to be a virgin, even after a passage had been made through her? Which is the greater miracle? The rod which made the rock to become a lake of water, or the Cross which cleansed the world?'

Be ashamed, therefore, at these miracles, O Jew, and worship Him Who took upon Himself flesh. But perhaps you, O heretic, will also say, 'What are the miracles?' O Jew, if you wish to know what are the miracles, hearken and I will inform you concerning them. They are: the begetting of the Child without seed; the childbirth which was not preceded by the marriage-bed and union with man; the Virgin who was holy and undefiled, who was both virgin and mother at the same time, and was still a virgin; the course and the disappearance of the star; the hymns of the angels, the fear of the shepherds, the gifts of the Magi, the obedience of the sea, the flight of the wind and its sinking to rest, the walking on the lake, the stilling of the waves, the leaping to the feet of those who were paralyzed; the making of the blind to see, the driving out of the devils, the revivification of those who were dead, the terror-stricken state of created things, the lamentation of heaven, the sun which became dark, the rocks which split asunder, the rending of the veil in the Temple, the coming forth from the tombs of those who were dead, the conversion of the thief, the affixing to the cross of the handwriting, and the bill of debt for which we were liable, the overthrow of your synagogue, the increase of the Church, and the growth and spreading abroad of piety.

Finally, when you have vomited your error and your folly, cry out with the Lawgiver Moses, saying, 'This is my God, I will ascribe glory unto him,' (Exod. 15:2) for unto Him belong glory and power, for all ages of ages. Amen.

– St. Proclus, Patriarch of Constantinople, *Homily 23 on the Nativity of Christ, delivered in the presence of the arch-heretic Nestorius*

## **Also Commemorated Today: St. Gregory the Decapolite**

Saint Gregory the Decapolite was born in the Isaurian city of Decapolis in the eighth century, to parents whose names were Sergios and Maria. At the age of eight he was given over to be educated in sacred writings. From his childhood he loved the temple of God and church services. He read Holy Scripture constantly and with reverence.



In order to avoid the marriage, which his parents had intended for him from the time he began to grow a beard and mustache, he secretly left home. Due to the Iconoclast heresy, he spent all his life wandering: he was in Constantinople in order to denounce Iconoclasm, in Rome and throughout the West where he preached and worked miracles, he returned to Constantinople, and from there he lived as an ascetic on Mount Olympus for a while, where he was only recognized by his voice due to his extreme asceticism. Gregory preached the word of God everywhere, denouncing the Iconoclast heresy, and strengthening the faith and fortitude of the Orthodox, whom the heretics in those times oppressed, tortured and imprisoned.

Through his extreme ascetic effort, hard work, self-control and constant prayer, Gregory attained the gifts of prophecy and wonderworking. After overcoming the passions and reaching the height of virtue, he was permitted to hear angelic singing in praise of the Holy Trinity. From Mount Olympus Gregory went to Thessaloniki, then he left the Monastery of Saint Menas near Thessaloniki, where he had labored for a long time, and he went again to Constantinople in order to combat the Iconoclast heresy. At the capital, he found Symeon the Confessor and God-bearer, who was imprisoned due to his veneration of the icons, and Gregory venerated him and received his blessing. A grievous illness undermined his strength, and he departed to the Lord in the year 816.

Saint Gregory was buried at a monastery in Constantinople, and many miracles took place at his tomb. As a result, the monks removed the holy relics of Saint Gregory and enshrined them in the church where people could venerate them.

When Constantinople fell to the Turks in 1453, the relics of Saint Gregory were carried to the region of the Danube by a Turkish official. In 1498 Barbu Craiovescu, the Ban of the Romanian Land (Wallachia) heard of the miracles performed by the holy relics and bought them for a considerable sum of money. Barbu Craiovescu placed the relics in the main church of Bistritsa Monastery which he founded in Rimnicu Vilcea, where they remain to the present day. (*from johnsanidopoulos.com*)

## **St. Proclus, Archbishop of Constantinople**

*The heavens have you Proclus as a winning-post, and those within rejoice over your golden words.*

Saint Proclus lived during the reign of Emperor Theodosius the Younger. A disciple and scribe of Saint John Chrysostom, he was ordained Bishop of Cyzicus about the year 426, but because the people there unlawfully elected another bishop before his arrival, he remained in Constantinople. In 429, Nestorius, who had been

Archbishop of Constantinople for about a year, and had already begun his blasphemous teaching that it is wrong to call the holy Virgin "Theotokos," invited Bishop Proclus to give a sermon on one of the feasts of our Lady, which he did, openly defending in Nestorius' presence the name "Theotokos," that is, "Mother of God." Saint Proclus was elevated to the throne of Archbishop of Constantinople in 434 on Holy Thursday. It was he who persuaded Emperor Theodosius the Younger and his holy sister Pulcheria to have the most sacred relics of his godly teacher Saint John Chrysostom brought back from Comana, and triumphantly received them upon their return to the imperial city (see Jan. 27 and Nov. 13). He reposed in peace in 447.

Proclus was renowned for the sanctity of his life and for his modesty, with which he succeeded to calm down the Church and to make many Nestorians return to her. Before ascending the throne of Constantinople, he was ordained Bishop of Cyzikus (426-434) by Patriarch Sisinius of Constantinople.

After the death of Patriarch Maximian, he was consecrated Patriarch of Constantinople, serving from this role for 12 years and 3 months "in a good way" according to the sources. Proclus returned the relics of his teacher Saint John Chrysostom to Constantinople in 438. He was renowned for his preaching, for which the Roman officer Valusian (before being baptised a Christian) declared that "if Rome had three men like Sir Proclus, there would not be there a single pagan."

With the *Tomus to the Armenians*, he proves that the basis for the Nestorian heresy are the christological opinions of Theodore of Mopsuestia, without, however, mentioning him explicitly (435). Speeches and letters of Proclus are saved, and have been published by K. J. P. Migne, F. Schwartz, F. J. Lorey.

To Proclus has wrongly been attributed the *Speech Regarding the Tradition of the Divine Liturgy*, which was composed in the 16th century due to the disputes between the Latins and the Protestants regarding the origin of the Divine Liturgy.

Being declared a Saint of the Orthodox Church, his holy memory is honored on the 20th of November. (*from johnsanidopoulos.com*)

### **Also Commemorated Today**

New Hieromartyrs Macarius bishop of Ecaterinoslav, Alexis, Alexander, Vladimir, John, Alexis, Basil, Nicholas, John, Emilian, Nocolos priests and Hieromartyrs Arsenius, Eutihus and Hillarion, Woman Hieromartyr Ioanicus hegumen (1937).

New Woman Hieromartyr Tatiana (after 1937).

Venerable Diodorus of George Hill (Solovki) (1633).

Martyr Dasius of Dorostolum (Romania) (303).

Martyrs Eustace, Thespesius, and Anatolius of Nicaea (312).

Hieromartyrs Nerses and Joseph; and John, Saverius, Isaac, and Hypatius, bishops of Persia; Martyrs Azades, Sasonius, Thecla, and Anna (343).

Martyrs Bautha and Denachis, who suffered with Hieromartyr Nerses of Persia (343).

St. Isaac, bishop of Armenia (440).

Venerable Theoctistus the Confessor (855).

++St. Edmund, king of England and martyr (869) (Celtic & British).

St. Sozomen of Cyprus (12th c.).

St. Humbert of the East Angles, Bishop & Martyr (870)

St. Colman of Dalriada, Argyllshire, Wales (unk)

St. Maxentia of Beauvais, Virgin Martyr (unk)

St. Eval of Cornwall, Bishop (6<sup>th</sup> c.)

## **New Church App!**

St. Thomas Parish now has a smartphone app! Our parish family is encouraged to download the “Church Center” app on either the Apple App Store or Google Play. Once you've downloaded the App, search for our parish. From the app you can see the Church calendar, donate, participate in church groups, and be notified about important information from St. Thomas Church.



## **Social Team for November 27**

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

## **Study on the Divine Liturgy Wednesday Evening**

As a reminder, we are holding the Study Series: *Exploration of the Divine Liturgy* on Wednesdays in the parish hall (house behind the church) at 7:00 pm following Lay Vespers (6:30 - 7:00). In the series, will work through the Liturgy to understand why each part is there, its significance in our Corporate Worship and our personal Christian development with a goal of bringing us closer to Christ. We will look at historical writings and explanations to gain a better understanding of our Liturgy.

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

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***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, Fr. 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.)