

# SOBORNOST

**St. Thomas the Apostle Orthodox Church**

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*American Carpatho-Russian Orthodox Diocese*

*ECUMENICAL PATRIARCHATE  
OF CONSTANTINOPLE*

## **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**

**December 11, 2022 – 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday Before Nativity**

## **Sunday of the Forefathers**

Even as we are falling into sin, cutting ourselves off from God, slaying ourselves with spiritual death; even amidst this, God speaks hope into our heart, reassuring us that there is a Savior for those who repent. This is proved to us by our Fore-Parents, Adam and Eve. For, after they sinned, they heard the Lord's words of condemnation of the serpent-devil, but mixed with this there was the first prophecy of the coming Messiah, Christ, the Savior of the world.

For the Lord speaks of the Seed of the Woman Who will crush the head of the serpent. Women do not produce seed, but men do; nor did the Jews trace the lineage of a person through the mother. But, He Who was begotten of the Father virginally before the ages was born of the Virgin-Mother without the seed of man, and therefore He is the Seed of the Woman, the Second Eve, the Virgin Mary, the Ever-Virgin Theotokos.

It is on her account that we celebrate today the Holy Forefathers of Christ. And it is for His sake that we honor her as the pinnacle of creation, the summation of the Old Testament, and the living Book inscribed with the very Word of God Himself, the opener of the New Testament.



Amidst this fair choir of forefathers, fathers, patriarchs and prophets stands the holy Enoch who was translated to where only God knows because of his faithful clinging to God all his earthly life.

Here also we find Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Jacob prophesied of the coming Christ also, giving the Jews and all the world the exact time of His arrival, leaving absolutely no doubt. For he says that a ruler shall not fail out of Judah until He Who is to come, comes, the Expectation, the Hope of the Nations. When King Herod—a Gentile—ascended the throne of ruler of the Jews, and was called the King of the Jews, though he was not of the tribe of Judah, then this prophecy came to pass.

Therefore, those who knew the Scriptures also knew that the Messiah would come during Herod's reign. The Pharisees had no excuse! And there is even testimony from Jewish tradition that they bewailed the fact that a ruler from Judah failed, and yet Christ had not come. They knew the time was come for the Christ, and they saw the Christ in the flesh, but they denied Him and His coming. This is only because they were blinded by passion, envy, hatred, pride, hypocrisy, and thus slew their Salvation and Life.

David was the first holy King of the Jews, who sprung from the tribe of Judah. Twice he had his enemy and pursuer, the maddened and murderous King Saul, in his hands. Twice he could have killed Saul, but twice he did not. He fulfilled the commandment to love one's enemies 1000 years before Christ came in the flesh, taught this commandment, and manifested its reality on the Cross. Therefore, this King David was truly a worthy fore-type of Christ the King of all Who pardoned His murderers while hanging on the Cross.

He was also graced with prophecy. Because of his love for his enemies, he was endowed with clear-sight and penetrated divine mysteries. He revealed the coming of Christ even more abundantly and vividly than Moses. Furthermore, he even revealed Christ's divine nature and origin. For, he speaks in the person of the Father, saying: From the womb before the morning star have I begotten Thee; that is: I the Father, before all creation and time have begotten Thee My Son.

David also revealed that the Messiah was God by nature, God from God as we confess in the Creed, when he said: Wherefore, God, Your God, has anointed You with the oil of gladness more than Your fellows; that is: Wherefore, O God the Son, Your God, the Father, has chrismated You, the Christ, with the grace of God the All-Holy Spirit, Whom He has poured out upon You without measure, upon Your human nature, for You are also God; even the Holy Spirit Who has ever been with You because of Your divine nature.

Again, King David's love granted him the grace to utter such high things, revealing in a shadow the Holy Trinity even before the mouth of Christ, One of the Holy Trinity, revealed the Trinity perfectly.

Yet this man fell—into adultery and murder. But his repentance was even greater than his sins. And he has become the mouth-piece of our salvation, uttering many divine hymns and psalms which have nourished the Church since Old Testament times, speaking the prayers and cries of our hearts, and expressing the hidden experiences and needs of our souls more than we ever could articulate. And this is because He was guided by the Holy Spirit because of his love and repentance. When love fails—through selfish lust and destructive anger—repentance restores us to love, it restores us to God, God Who is Love.

Solomon his son was a very wise man, the wisest, although he fell into fornication and idolatry. Yet, he has left us many books of wisdom, and is numbered as a Saint of the Church, praised by us today on account of being a Holy Forefather of Christ. This can only mean that he repented in his heart, and the Lord found him worthy despite his many falls into sin. Maybe it was on account of the fact that he was a man of peace. It was told by God to David that, although he desired to build a temple for the Lord, he would not, but his son would; because, the Lord explained, thou, David art a man of war, but thy son will be a man of peace. It may have been this peace of King Solomon which was remembered by God, interceded for him, and was reckoned in God's great mercy as more than enough to tip the scales of all his sins.

And this is encouragement for us, and a warning. It is encouragement, because such a licentious man still found grace enough before God to become an instrument of our salvation, a forefather of Salvation Himself, our Savior Christ. It is also a warning to us Orthodox Christians, for although we have all things necessary for our salvation, have been united to the Body of Christ God Himself, are nourished upon His Most Holy Body and Most Precious Blood countless times; although we have all these things, we must never grow proud, self-reliant, pharisaical, self-complacent or comfortable with our supposed piety, or Orthodoxy, or righteousness.

We will be like the ungrateful Jews who had all things, the promises, the warnings, the holy fathers, the Scriptures, the prophecies, and the very Son of God Himself being birthed into this world in Jewish blood. Though they had all this, many forsook Christ. But let us never forget that there were other Jews, truly righteous Jews, humble Jews—who had the same promises, the same Scriptures, the same Christ come in the flesh: the Holy Apostles and all those who believed on Christ and united with Him for all eternity.

And there were also those who stood at the foot of the Cross, and although they cried out with madness and hatred: Crucify, crucify Him; though they hated Him with a deep and evil hatred and slew Him in cold blood; many even of these, when they saw the earthquake, the dead risen and gone into the city, and heard their words; those who also saw the veil of the temple being torn asunder; many of those who at one moment murdered God on the Cross, turned in whole-hearted repentance and believed on Him. Some may even have become martyrs. Their stories are untold and their lives are hidden and known to God alone.

Now we, we have Christ, the Church, the fullness of His teaching, the Gospel, the Holy Fathers, and before us today the example of all those who loved and longed for Christ in hope before His appearing on earth, before His incarnation, before they could reach out and touch Him and handle Him, clasp His feet, before they saw and experienced their Salvation and Life, God Himself in substance, in human flesh.

We have the fullness, therefore we will be held more accountable; yes, more accountable than the High Priests Annas and Caiaphas who slaughtered Christ. We will be held more accountable than the blind Pharisees. We will be held more accountable than all those who lived with the Forefathers in the Old Testament. We must take these things to heart, never become proud in our Orthodoxy, and never sever ourselves from Christ through self-admiration, self-preoccupation, self-aggrandizement, self-adulation, self-worship, the idol of self.

We must constantly seek to enter into the mystery of Christ, to experience Him. And now, that we are coming close again to celebrate His ever-memorable Incarnation and Nativity, now we must seek more than ever to be reborn in Christ, to give birth mystically in our souls and bodies to the grace of the Spirit, the Spirit of salvation. We must beg God to create in us a clean and pure heart.

We must ruminate on the love of God at all times, for His love is an abyss. We must fill our minds and hearts and mouths with His divine Scriptures, ruminating on the holy thoughts therein. We must fill our souls with salvific and illuminating psalmody. We must call out the sweet name of Christ amidst all our perils, all our afflictions, all our strife, all our warfare, all our passions. We must beg Him to help us, to do again what the prophets cried out long ago: O Lord, bow down the heavens and come down, become incarnate again, take on substance and life, but now, within me, within the Church, within all the world which You care to unite to Yourself and to nourish eternally with Your Most Holy Body and Blood.

We must constantly lay ourselves bare before Christ, confessing and revealing our weakness, our passions, our sickness, our disease, our incurable wounds. If we do this, He will truly come down to us. The Holy Fathers teach us that His Incarnation

must be made active in us personally and individually, as we struggle in the community of the Church.

The Holy Fathers also teach us not to think that the Lord's descent into hades is something long past, happening long ago, somewhere, some place far outside of us, detached from our personal life. No, they say that our heart is hades, and Christ desires to descend into it in order to make it the Kingdom of heaven.

Ours is the wretchedness, the darkness, the imprisonment. His is the restoration, the illumination, the unbinding and loosing and freeing. Ours is the despair and passion. His is the hope, the uplifting, the instilling within us of the knowledge of His all-conquering and all-powerful and all-healing mercy, which purifies us, makes us natural, fills us with light and unites us to what is above-natural, He Himself, the Life of all, the Beginning of all, the Power of life for all, the End and Summit and Culmination and Everlasting Life of all.

Let us seek Him with fervent hearts. Or at least offer the two mites of our wretched and distracted and darkened minds and our cold indifferent hearts. If we do not have a kingdom of gold worth of virtue, then let us offer Him the filthy rags of whatever small little desire and feeble efforts that we have. Even if they are soiled by vainglory, or selfish ambition, or motivated by some other thing other than pure love for God, still, if we offer them, conscious of their worthlessness, He will receive them as the Loving Father, Who cherishes our intention and the laying forth of all that we have to give.

Impress upon our souls the knowledge of Your mercy and love. Fill our hearts with, with what? Fill it with Your Spirit, make Your Son become incarnate within us. What other prayer can we have? For a prayer is a wish, a moving towards God, and a seeking of unity with His will. But what other than our purification, illumination, transformation, deification and vibrant ever-growing eternal life in Him; what other than this is His will, His kingdom? What else shall we beg for? He has given us His Only-Begotten. He has already given us the All. What else can we ask for, other than the bringing to life, the full reality and the activation and realization of His Son's Incarnation with us?

Let us bow down before Christ now, let us worship Him, Who is coming from heaven again to restore and reinvigorate and overfill our barrenness, our darkness, our imprisonment. Let us beg Him to come again, to bow down the heavens, to take up and renew His abode within us, and to bless and perfect us now, at this minute, for the rest of the day, for all our life, and for all eternity unto the ages of ages, unto the glory of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen. (*adapted from holycross.org*)

## **Today's Epistle Lesson – St. Paul's Letter to the Colossians 3:4-11 EOB**

Brethren, when Christ who is our life is revealed, then you will also be revealed with him in glory. Therefore, put to death what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, depraved passions, lust and greed (which is idolatry). Because of these things, the wrath of God is coming on the children of disobedience. You also used to live in those things when you lived among these people; but now, put them all away: anger, rage, evil, slander, and shameful language. Do not lie to one another. You have put off the old self with his doings and you have put on the new self who is being renewed in knowledge according to the image of his Creator. Here, there cannot be Greek and Jew, circumcision and uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free; but Christ is all, and in all!

## **Today's Gospel Lesson – Saint Luke 14:16-24 EOB**

At that time, Jesus said, "A certain man gave a great banquet and invited many people. At supper time, he sent out his servant to tell those who were invited, 'Come, for everything is ready now!' But they all began to make excuses. The first told him, 'I have bought a field, and I must go and see it. Please have me excused!' Another said, 'I have bought five yoke of oxen and I must go try them out. Please have me excused!' Another said, 'I have just been married, and therefore I cannot come!' That servant came back and reported these things to his lord. At this, the master of the house became angry and said to his servant, 'Go out quickly into the streets and alleys of the city, and bring in the poor, the maimed, the blind, and the lame.' The servant said, 'Lord, it is done as you commanded, and there is still room!' The lord then told the servant, 'Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel people to come in, so that my house may be filled! For I tell you that none of those who were invited will taste of my supper.'"

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

"In the beginning was the Word"; the other gospel writers expounded the genealogy of your Lord and God Jesus Christ in the flesh, but John, the distinguished one among the gospel writers, the lyre that speaks of God, discoursed on the existence without beginning of God the Word, and narrated the Father's engendering of the Son, before the ages, and without witness. And he said, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him." (Jn. 1:1-3). These five stones are sufficient for the Church as fortification. For he said, "In the beginning was the Word." He did not say, "In the beginning the Word came into existence,;" but "In the beginning was the Word." He indicated that the existence of the Son was without beginning, pointing also to his relationship with the Father.

And stronger stands the foundation of our faith! “And the Word was with God.” He indicated the indivisibility of the divine essence, and loud sounds the thundering of the evangelist against the pagans! “And the Word was God.” He indicated the exact similarity of nature, and great falls the blow against the Jews! “He was in the beginning with God.” He pointed to the eternal co-existence of the Son with the Father, and great indeed is the fall of the Manichaeans! “All things were made through him.” Heaven is his creation. The earth is his handiwork. The sea is his work. The air was created. Light came forth from that which existed not. The angels became his servants, the powers his ministers, the cherubim his throne. The Father is God. The Son is Word and God. But also the Holy Spirit is God! And number did not impair the nature of the divine existence, nor did the Trinity divide the essence, but it is a triad of equal substance in power, in divinity, in goodness, that firmly founded and preserved our faith, and fortified the Church, and sanctified the world, and destroyed the devil, and punished the demons, and brought them to naught, and made the circumcision of the Jews void, and expelled the error of the pagans, and blocked up the mouths of heretics.

And the evangelist discoursed on the Father's engendering of the Son before all ages and without witness, and wrote in his gospel, “The only Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he has made him known” (J. 1:19). And again, “And look, a voice from heaven saying, 'This is my beloved Son with whom I am well pleased’” (Mt. 3:17). Therefore the engendering above in heaven before all things was without witness, because an only Son was engendered by an only Father; and no one knows how he engendered, except the Father. And the Son knows how he was engendered; for time existed not, for he himself is the Creator of the ages. Angels were not present, for it is he “who makes his angels winds” (Ps. 103:4, Heb. 1:7). Heaven existed not, “for by the word of the Lord the heavens were established” (Ps. 32:6). The sun existed not, for he positioned “the great light to illuminate the day” (Gen. 1:15). The moon existed not, nor the stars, “for he established the moon and the stars” (Ps. 8:4). The earth existed not, for he said, “Let the waters be gathered, and the dry land appear” (Gen. 1:9). Indeed in a wondrous way the evangelist explained the Word's existence without beginning, and the Son's engendering before the ages and without witness.

O blessed John, who taught you to say these things? The sea of Genesaret? But it does not teach doctrines. Fishing? But it does not discourse on God and divine truths. Zebedee? But he is a common man. The fatherland? But it is insignificant. The village? But it consists of country people, not city dwellers. The Jews? But they are transgressors of the law. The law? But it contained a shadow. Moses? But he was weak-voiced and slow of tongue. David? But he was “a worm, and not a man” (Ps. 21:6). How then did you say, “In the beginning

was the Word”? Who lifted you up to such a great height? Who endowed your mind with such wings? For through faith you left the earth, and came to stand above the air, and passed beyond the ether; you flew beyond the supramundane heights of heaven; you leapt over the things above; you went past archangels; you were put on a level with the seraphim; you arrived at the throne of the Lord, surrounded by the cherubim; you were given wings by faith; you proclaimed with a loud voice the inconceivable engendering; you proclaimed the incomprehensible existence; you discoursed on the Word that has no beginning. For you said, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.”

Beloved, great is the grace of God. A man, three cubits tall, went with his mind and thoughts, together with the Word, into heaven. In faith he saw one who came without suffering from the bosom of the Father, indeed God born of God. He saw the Holy Spirit worshiped with the Father and the Son, the Trinity glorified in unity, divided into three persons, but united in nature. And the evangelist was found far above the seraphim, because they cover their faces on account of the divine lightning, but he, by reason of grace, discoursed on both the divine engendering and existence.

And having again in reality descended from the heavens upon the earth, he stated, “The Word became flesh” (Jn. 1:14). Behold the mystery of God, without change and alteration; behold the Word that became flesh on earth, without having withdrawn from the heavens; behold the virgin who gave birth, but whose virginity was not impaired; behold a womb, wider than heaven; behold a mother without travail, and a birth without pain; behold God being born as man; behold a child, that was full-grown before all times; behold one bound in swaddling-clothes, who unbound by his command the grave-clothes of Lazarus; behold creation which recognized the Creator; behold a cave, the place of expiation for the world; behold the creature carrying the Creator; behold the one being fed, who feeds the one feeding him; behold the one at the bosom of a mother, but not separated from the bosom of the Father; behold one worshiped by the Magi, and praised by angels; behold one who fled to Egypt in the flesh, but holds the earth in his hand; behold one baptized with water, who caused the waters to gush forth from the earth; behold a master betrayed by a disciple; behold one bound, who did not unbind the virginity of the mother; behold him who stood next to Pilate, but who formed Pilate from clay; behold him who was crowned with thorns, but who crowned the earth with flowers; behold him who was crucified on earth, but who was lifted up into the heavens; behold a corpse in a tomb, who raised the dead from the tomb; behold one risen, who beforehand made known the resurrection; behold one who descended into Hades, but who ascended into the heavens. For Hades vomited forth the one whom he swallowed in his ignorance.



And who is it then whom he saw? Who? “He who bowed the heavens, and came down” (Ps. 17:10) silently. He who escaped the notice of the powers above; he who did not leave the throne of his Father empty, when he became incarnate from the virgin. In heaven “without mother” (Heb. 7:3), God from God, and earth born of a mother, son of a virgin, the Lover of mankind who became man on account of men. He who sanctified the immaculate womb through his indwelling; he who freed the womb from blemish; he who consecrated nature's organs of generation; he who sealed the womb of the virgin; he whom the heavenly places did not confine, and whom the womb did not limit; he who before the ages created the ages; he who with authoritative power created the world by his word; he who is the ineffable Word of the Father; he who is the Son consubstantial with his Begetter; he who is without beginning, not admitting of a beginning, but having taken on a beginning of existence. Beloved, beyond human conception are the wonders, because the throne in heaven was not made empty, yet the world on earth was saved. The five statements of John, the great and loud-voiced evangelist, contain all these things. Let the pagans therefore be annihilated, and the Jews destroyed. Let the Samaritans be put to shame, and the Manichaeans be dispersed. Let heretics be destroyed, and all the enemies of the immaculate catholic and apostolic church, because the hope of them all is doomed to a fall and perdition, but our hope is focused on resurrection and life eternal, through our Lord Jesus Christ, to whom, as well as the the Father and the Holy Spirit, belong the glory and the honor and the power, forevermore. Amen. – St. Proclus, Archbishop of Constantinople, *Homily 15 On the Engendering of Christ*

### **Venerable Daniel the Stylite**

*From all things earthly, and even the earth you turned away, Daniel, having lived then on a pillar and now in the heavens.*

*On the eleventh Daniel by standing on a pillar found his end.*

Our venerable Father Daniel lived during the reign of Leo the Great, whose surname was Marcellus (457-474), and was from Mesopotamia of Syria, in the region of Samosata, from the village known as Marutha, and whose father was Elias and mother was Martha. He was born after a wondrous vision to his mother, which took place prior to his conception. At five years old, his parents offered him to a Monastery, so that the sacred child would receive his name in a sacred place. In this Monastery he was named Daniel by its director, by means of a sign. And of course from that time he was dedicated to God, fulfilling the promise of his parents, just as the Prophet Samuel was dedicated from infancy. Likewise the director of the Monastery accepted him in his very young age. But because the child did not accept, for this reason Daniel was not dedicated to God at that time.

When he reached twelve years of age, he disdained the things of the world, and went to the Coenobium, where he was dressed in the monastic schema. There Daniel progressed and prevailed both in his physical age as well as spiritual virtue. Then he went to Saint Symeon the Stylite, and received his blessing. Returning to the Monastery, he found the Abbot deceased. Wherefore by force the brothers of the Monastery made him Abbot, but he was not entirely persuaded. Because it was his aim for many years to go to the Holy Land of Jerusalem, he secretly left the Monastery, and as he walked he considered it a blessing to return again to the same Saint Symeon the Stylite. Having gone back there, he was prevented by him from going to Jerusalem; rather he was to go to Constantinople. Hence he went near to Constantinople, to Anaplon, where he enclosed himself in a temple of idols, and there he suffered many temptations by demons.

Afterwards he ascended a pillar, where this renowned man showed such noble and extraordinary asceticism. Without covering or roof, he withstood the heat of the summer and the frost of the winter. Wherefore he received from the Lord the gift to work many miracles. His virtue and name became so famous, that he became known to Emperor Leo, as well as his successor Zeno in 474, and even the tyrant after him Basiliscus. They themselves went and venerated him. Having heard the things that came from his mouth, they considered following him. The Saint helped the Church of Christ as well, which was battled against at the time by heretics. Having passed his life venerably and blamelessly, he departed to the Lord. His Synaxis is celebrated in Anaplon. *(from johnsanidopoulos.com)*

## **An Icon of the Mother of God Surrounded by Righteous Foremothers of the Old Testament**

The Shuiskaya-Smolensk Icon of the Mother of God in a frame with images of foremothers and prophetesses can be seen on the iconostasis of the Kremlin's Annunciation Cathedral. The image of the Mother of God itself dates back to the 15th century, and it is quite standard. But its frame is unique, although it was created later, in the late 16th - early 17th centuries. It is unique, firstly, in that it depicts women of the Old Testament, who were usually never depicted in icons. And also the fact that one of these women is possibly a hidden portrait of Princess Sophia. The righteous women are depicted in round medallions, each contains an inscription, a name and a phrase, as if coming from the mouth, but some of the inscriptions (on the right side of the frame) are made in such a way that they can only be read with the help of a mirror. An order for such an unusual work probably came from Tsarina Natalya Alexeevna (sister of Tsar Peter I) in 1698. This year Tsar Peter urgently returned from a trip abroad to Moscow to suppress the Streltsy revolt. The instigator of the riot, Princess Sophia, was tonsured a nun and imprisoned in the Novodevichy Convent.

There is a version that the icon painter in the guise of the Righteous Susanna (her portrait is in the center of the lower edge of the frame) conveyed the features of the disgraced Princess Sophia, who took the name of Susanna at tonsure (although Sophia's features are guessed in all portraits). The images of the righteous women form symmetrical pairs according to the meaning of their life, the inscriptions (with the help of a mirror) are combined into a symbolic text, and thus the frame with the stamps becomes a symbolic mirror reflecting the purity of the Virgin Mary. And since the Mother of God herself in spiritual literature is likened to a "clear mirror without a spot", the entire work acquires a hidden meaning due to the spatial metaphor of "mirror in mirror."

The border depicts eighteen righteous women of the Old Testament:

Top row, left to right:

Righteous Leah, Jacob's first wife;  
 Righteous Sarah, Abraham's wife;  
 Foremother Eve;  
 Righteous Rebecca, wife of Isaac;  
 Righteous Rachel, Jacob's 2<sup>nd</sup> wife.

Left row, top to bottom:

Prophetess Miriam, sister of Moses;  
 Righteous Deborah, Judge of Israel;  
 Righteous Ruth;  
 Righteous Abigail (*see 1 Samuel (1 Kingdoms LXX) 25 – Ed.*).

Right row, top to bottom:

Righteous Rahab;  
 Righteous Jael (*see Judges 4:17-22, 5:24 – Ed.*);  
 Righteous Hannah, mother of the Prophet Samuel;  
 Righteous Abishag (*see 1 Kings (3 Kingdoms LXX) 1:1-2:22 – Ed.*).

Bottom row, from left to right: Righteous Zarephath, to whom the Prophet Elijah was sent; Righteous Judith, who killed Holofernes (*Book of Judith (LXX) – Ed.*); Righteous Susanna (*Book of Daniel (LXX) – Ed.*); Righteous Esther who delivered the Jewish people from Haman; Righteous Shunammite, who gave the Prophet Elisha hospitality. (*from johnsanidopoulos.com*)



## Also Commemorated Today

New Hieromartyr Theophan, bishop of Solokamsk (1918) and with him 2 Hieromartyrs and 5 Martyrs (1918).  
New Hieromartyr Nicholas priest (1937).  
New Hieromartyr John priest (1941).  
St. Kuksha (Velichko), hieroschemamonk of Odessa (1964).  
Venerable Nicon the Dry of Kiev Caves, confessor (1101).  
Martyr Mirax of Egypt (649).  
Martyr Acepsius and Aeithalas at Arbela in Assyria (354).  
Venerable Luke the New Stylite of Chalcedon, presbyter (979).  
Venerable Leontius, monk, of Monemdasia in the Peloponnesus (1450).  
Monk-martyr Barsabas, abbot of Ishtar and 10 companions in Persia (342).  
Martyrs Terentius, Vincent, Emilian and Bebaia (*Greek*).  
St. Cian, hermit of Wales (6<sup>th</sup> c.)  
Martyr Eutychius of Spain (4<sup>th</sup> c.)  
Ven. Fidweten, monk of Brittany (888)  
St. Peris of Wales  
St. Sabinus, Bishop of Piacenza in Italy (420)  
Martyrs Trason, Pontian and Preetextatus of Rome (c. 302)  
Martyrs Victoricus, Fuscian and Gentian of France (c. 287)

## 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 December 18

Team 2 is up next week - Dewey, Carrie LaMere, Heather Shear, Ezra Dotson, Connell. 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

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, 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.)