

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

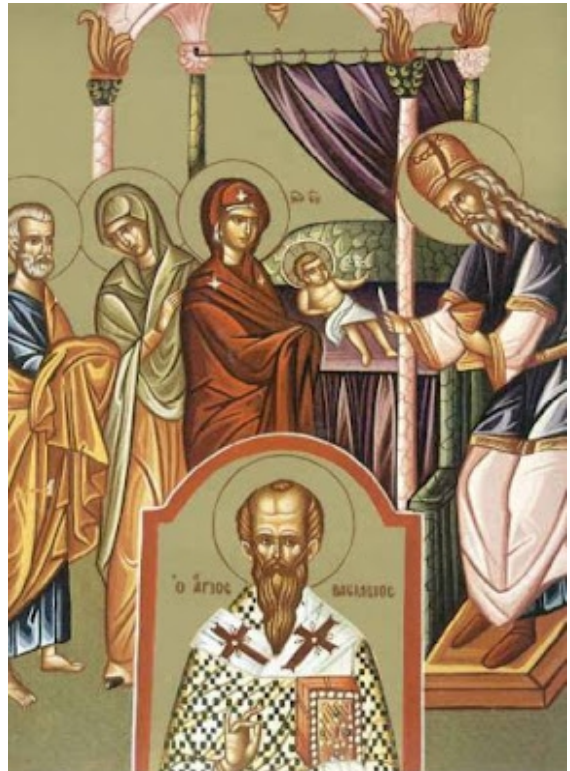
**January 1, 2023 – Feast of the Circumcision of Our
Lord | St. Basil the Great, Bishop of Caesarea
Sunday Before Theophany**

On this day [January 1] we commemorate our Holy Father Basil the Great, Archbishop of Caesarea in Cappadocia.

Basil lives and dies in the Lord. He lives also with us as speaking from his books.

Basil died on the first of January.

Our Holy Father Basil flourished during the reign of Emperor Valens (364-378), and presented himself before Valens for his Orthodox faith and rebuked him, for Valens fell into the cacodoxies of the Arians, and in a wild and beastly manner he maltreated and fought against the Orthodox Churches. From his father he was from the area of the Black Sea, and from his mother he was a Cappadocian, and lived in what is called Karaman. In esteem and education, he excelled, not only in the notables of his time, but even in the ancient philosophers. He passed through all forms of education, and became authoritative and prevailing in their acquisition. Not only this, but he also actively practiced philosophy. And by this activity he was elevated to the vision of the nature of created things. Therefore, he was also elevated to the throne of the Hierarchy.



When he became a Hierarch, the blessed one endured many struggles for the Orthodox faith. With the steadfastness and nobility of his mind, he astounded the prefect Modestus. With the Orthodox discourses that he composed, he thundered against the minds of the cacodox, and the state of their character he adjusted. He taught ascetic philosophy, and made clear the knowledge of the nature of created things. In summary, this Saint led Christ's rational flock to salvation through every virtue, and departed to the Lord.

According to the features of his body, Basil the Great was very tall, lean and thin, his face dark in color with a mix of yellow. He was long-nosed with round brow and the skin above his brow was orderly. He looked like someone who was thoughtful and careful with himself. His face was wrinkled with few wrinkles, his cheeks long, and his head thick with hairs that were orderly and round. It seemed from his appearance that he had his hair cut few times. His beard was plenty long and the hairs were a mix of black and white. His Synaxis is held in the Most Holy Great Church. – Synaxarion



Among the Holy Fathers who railed against those who are unjustly rich, who are grounded in their material assets, and who were indifferent towards injustice and the hunger prevailing in society, was Basil the Great. It should be noted that Basil the Great spoke about the hot social issues of his day, since previously he himself had given an example. He had distributed to the poor his large fortune and then became a Priest and then the Bishop of Caesarea in Cappadocia. So he did not voice his concerns in his writings merely theoretically. He first lived it and then taught it, which is why his words were like thunder, since previously his life was lightning.

Basil the Great worked pastorally. He did not try to switch the resentment of the poor against the rich to create hatred, but he tried to heal both the poor and the rich to see things differently. When issues are addressed at the surface they create bigger problems. So when talking about the uncertainty of riches and how easily it changes when certain societal changes take place, he then stresses that we should despise material goods. As I have written previously, he did this to do pastoral work for the people. The easiest thing is for one to deceive the people and throw out slogans that only touch the surface. It is most difficult to treat the passions of the people. By teaching contempt for material goods he wants to shift the thinking of both the rich and the poor away from material goods, so that they would cease thinking these are the only goods of the earth. His words of contempt for material goods are not Manichean, but he makes an effort to bring balance to society. Indeed there are two possible situations on how one can handle material goods: the

first is Idolatry (to deify it) and the other is Manichean (to reject it). The Fathers of the Church accepted neither the one nor the other, but they accepted that material possessions are gifts from God, which must be offered back as gifts to God and our fellow man.

When he needed to be fiery he was. When he saw the rich boast about the power of their wealth, then he was not silent. In one of his works he says that he considers the perfect society to be that which banishes the acquisition of property and the opposition of opinion (quarrels). However, when one studies the entire teaching of Basil the Great, we see that he did not criticize property ownership as much as he did the ownership of material goods. He wanted to make the rich have a love for honor and give freely to those who had need, and thus allow sharing to prevail upon the earth. He tries to illustrate such sharing with many examples.

He uses the case of animals. The sheep graze upon the mountains and the numerous horses enjoy the grass of the earth from the same plain without quarrels between them. But we grab onto what is to be common and appropriate that which belongs to many.

He also uses physical arguments. He says that the one who appropriates material goods is like a spectator who is first to enter a theater and occupies the entire space without allowing others to enter, because he considers it entirely his own. Also, since a person is born naked and returns to the earth naked, it is absurd to appropriate material goods because one rushed to acquire it.

He even uses the argument of the societal destination of material goods and wealth. Bread, he says, belongs to the hungry, a robe to the naked, shoes to the barefoot, silver to the poor. He who hides his goods and avoids clothing the naked or feeding the hungry is no better than the thief who strips the hungry of food and clothing. The Saint said these things in his day because it was a time of hunger and the rich had full warehouses.

He also uses the example of the early Church, in which everything was commonly shared: life, soul, harmony, a table, a brotherhood and love that changed many people and harmonized various souls to be in concord. This joint ownership should be interpreted as sharing.

Beyond these things in the works of Basil the Great, he also very much stressed the value of true wealth, which is the Grace of Christ. A rich person without Christ is destitute and a poor person with Christ is fabulously rich. Material pleasures, he said, have more pain than physical pleasure. Riches have their threats, sweets, satisfactions, and unremitting delights have various illnesses and other passions. The Apostles had Christ and so they had everything. The same happens with the Saints.

The Fathers of the Church tried to solve the problems of their times based on God and the salvation of man, and continuously sought to elevate people's minds to the true good, which is God. - By His Eminence Metropolitan Hierotheos of Nafaktos and Agiou Vlasiou (*from johnsanidopoulos.com*)

For more on St. Basil the Great, see the Funeral Oration of his friend St. Gregory the Theologian at <https://www.johnsanidopoulos.com/2021/01/funeral-oration-for-saint-basil-great.html> – Ed.

Today's Epistle Lesson – St. Paul's Letter to the Colossians 2:8-12 EOB

Brethren, be careful not to let anyone rob you through philosophy and vain deceit, according to human tradition and the basic things of the world, and not after Christ. For in him all the fullness of deity dwells bodily, and in him who is the head of all principality and power, you are made full. In him, you were also circumcised with a circumcision not made with hands, by casting off the sinful nature in the circumcision of Christ. You have been buried with him through baptism in which you were also raised with him through faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead.

Today's Gospel Lesson – Saint Luke 2:20-21, 40-52 EOB

At that time, the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, just as it was told them. When the eight days were fulfilled and the time came for the circumcision of the Child, He was named Jesus, the name given by the angel before He was conceived in the womb.

The child was growing, and was becoming strong in spirit, being filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was upon him. His parents went every year to Jerusalem for the feast of the Passover. When Jesus was twelve years old, they went up to Jerusalem according to the custom of the feast. When they had fulfilled the days, as they were returning, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem. Joseph and his mother did not notice it. Supposing him to be in the company, they went a day's journey and began to look for him among their relatives and acquaintances. When they did not find him, they returned to Jerusalem, looking for him. After three days, they found him in the temple, sitting among the teachers, both listening to them and asking them questions. All who heard him were amazed by his understanding and answers. When his parents saw him, they were astonished, and his mother said to him, "Son, why have you treated us this way? Behold, your father and I were anxiously looking for you." He said to them, "Why were you looking for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?" But they did not understand what he said to them. After this, he went down with them, and

came to Nazareth. He was obedient to them, and his mother kept all these sayings in her heart. And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, as well as in favor with God and men.

A Word From the Holy Fathers

The word of the divinely inspired scripture is shared in common, and teaches a great and deep mystery “into which angels long to look” (1 Pet. 1:12), according to what has been written; for those among the pagans who think they are wise utter nothing useful and necessary, though they have employed the beauty of diction, misleading through it their audiences. But we, “having (the heavenly treasure) in earthen vessels” (2 Cor. 4:7), that is, an inferior and ordinary diction, believe that we are blessed because that which pleases the Lord is known to us.

Consider then the ineffable dispensation of the mystery concerning Christ, in reference to which also the blessed prophet Isaiah was all but amazed when he said, “Lord, my God, I shall glorify you and shall praise your name, for you have done wonderful things, long-planned, certain and sure” (Is. 25:1); for Christ had been predetermined and beforehand made known before the foundation of the world, and has been revealed also in the last times of the present age.

He was born of a woman and was at the bosom of his mother like a recently born child; he, the eternal Word, came in the flesh. O, great and wonderful thing! According to the flesh he was a child on earth, but again filled the heaven. He accepted the act of circumcision; the one enthroned with the Father was born under the law. The Lord of Moses observed the commandment of Moses. This was indeed what the blessed Paul proclaimed: “But when the time had fully come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law” (Gal. 4:4); for He was not under the law before his incarnation, but when he was born of woman, then he became an observer of the law.

Thus the manner of the incarnation with the flesh introduced the submission and the being born under the law of him who, as God, is above the law; for having become man he was obliged not to dishonor the limitation of mankind. And that it is altogether something slight and unworthy of the majesty which is in him, to be subjected to the law, I shall also say to you; for there is no other slight thing like the sharing of flesh and blood. It is a slight thing by common consent; but it was necessary, or rather, it was most proper for him to fully save the earth under the heaven, and destroy Death, and annihilate Sin, and transform the human race to what it was in the beginning, and win earth under the heaven for God and the Father.

For this reason “he was concerned with the descendants of Abraham” (Is. 41:8-9, Heb. 2:16), and almost in equal manner with us shared flesh and blood. Did he take the form of a servant, yet not also submission to the law? For to be under the law is the lot of a servant. He then took the form of a servant, he who was according to his own nature a free man. He was circumcised according to the law, and he also offered on behalf of himself “a pair of turtledoves and two young pigeons” (Lk. 2:24) as it is written.

Marvel indeed at these things! For these things were through Moses hidden in shadows and types, but Christ is the reality. But behold, he beforehand gave an offering, and thus fulfilled the types; but Christ himself was the reality, he who through a slight thing like a turtledove and pigeon was foreshadowed by the things of old. For the pigeon is meek, and the turtledove is most loquacious and melodious; and such is Christ, for he is meek like a pigeon, and most melodious like a turtledove. For he delights the earth under heaven with gospel teachings.

Therefore, like in the types according to the law, like a most eloquent turtledove, like a very meek pigeon, our Savior was slaughtered, in order that he might redeem us with his own blood, and sanctify us with his Holy Spirit, both now and forever. Amen. – St. Proclus, Archbishop of Constantinople, *Homily 22 On the Circumcision of Christ*

Homily on the New Year

We now have a New Year, and we have come to the temple of God to pray; what should we pray for now, what should we ask God for ourselves in the New Year? When we came to the temple of God, listeners, did you think about it? And you should definitely think about it. So, at least, let's talk now: what should we ask God for ourselves in the New Year, what should we pray to Him for now?

Here's what: so that the Lord God would help us start a new life from the New Year, live virtuously and not sin. It is necessary, listeners, we must take care of this. For many of us, the coming year may be the last year on earth, and perhaps none of us who are now in this temple will live to see the next New Year. So, many of our relatives, friends, acquaintances also thought, wished, tried to live until this year, but where are they now? However, let it be so that we will live on earth for a long time; what will we lose when we live virtuously? Not only will we not lose anything, but we will gain everything, save it, multiply it.

Yes, listeners, and our health will improve a lot if we live virtuously, for we are weak and sick almost more often than not because we lead an intemperate and vicious life. Most of our sicknesses come from sins or wear us out from sins. Adam in Paradise, until he sinned, was healthy, and as he transgressed the commandment

of God, he recognized the disease. If we live virtuously, then poverty will not burden us. Although poverty is not a vice, it is very often the result of vices. The holy King David said that in all his life he had not seen a righteous man left behind and his descendants asking for bread (Ps. 36:25). The righteous man gives and has mercy every day, but everything does not decrease from him. Just as the water does not decrease in the river, although it flows unceasingly, so the wealth of the righteous does not decrease, though he constantly squanders it. And what is wealth to the righteous? He is rich even when he is poor. A little is better for a righteous person than a lot is for a sinner. Yes, listeners, black bread is also sweet for those who get it by their own labors.

If we live virtuously, then we will not be in dishonor. The virtuous are respected by all; they are respected even by the most ungodly people. However, both dishonor and reproaches from others, what is there to fear for someone whose soul is pure and whose conscience does not reproach for anything? You can't please everyone. And if you start to please everyone, then, perhaps, you will offend God.

If we live virtuously, then we will not be unhappy in misfortunes, either we will soon get rid of them, or they will not be so painful for us. For good and sorrow have their sweetness; and it is a joy for him to suffer, at least not hard, who has a clear conscience. After a storm and bad weather, the weather is better, more cheerful; so after sorrows and misfortunes, the soul of the virtuous is still purer and calmer. If only one of you did not suffer as a murderer, or a thief, or a villain, or as an encroachment on someone else's; but if you are a Christian, then do not be ashamed, but glorify God for such a fate (1 Pet. 4:15-16). In a word, if we live virtuously, then everything necessary for life will be with us and will be abundant. Seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, our Savior says, and all this will be added to you (Matt. 6:33), that is, just do not forget the main thing and live in truth, and what is needed, everything will come to be: there will be food and clothing, and housing.

Let us pray, listeners, now to the Lord God, that He will help us start a new life from this New Year, live virtuously and not sin, and not only now, but we will unceasingly ask and pray to Him for this. Amen. - By Archpriest Rodion Putyatin (*from johnsanidopoulos.*)

Pray for our priests!

Prayer is powerful, and we need more priests in our Diocese. So, this 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. Peter Paproski, Fr. Photios Parks, and Deacon Robert Conjelko. The seminarians are:

Thomas Kovalak, Nicholas Woroby, Seamus Murray, Thomas Slosky, Samuel Loposky, Timothy Paproski, Nicholas Fong, and Nicolas Laliberte. We started this two years ago, and we already have more seminarians! I can't wait to see what happens next!

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. Peter Paproski, Fr. Photios Parks, and Deacon Robert Conjelko, and seminarians Thomas Kovalak, Nicholas Woroby, Seamus Murray, Thomas Slosky, Samuel Loposky, Timothy Paproski, Nicholas Fong, and Nicolas Laliberte. 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.

Holy Martyr Telemachus

The last known gladiator fight in Rome was on 1 January 404, during the reign of Emperor Honorius (393-423). Bishop Theodoret of Cyrus informs us how this took place (*Eccl. Hist.* Bk. 5, Ch. 26):

Honorius, who inherited the empire of Europe, put a stop to the gladiatorial combats which had long been held at Rome. The occasion of his doing so arose from the following circumstance. A certain man by the name of Telemachus had embraced the ascetic life. He had set out from the East and for this reason had repaired to Rome. There, when the abominable

spectacle was being exhibited, he went himself into the stadium, and, stepping down into the arena, endeavored to stop the men who were wielding their weapons against one another. The spectators of the slaughter were indignant, and inspired by the mad fury of the demon who delights in those bloody deeds, stoned the peacemaker to death. When the admirable emperor was informed of this he numbered Telemachus in the array of victorious martyrs, and put an end to that impious spectacle.

The *Roman Martyrology* adds the following:

At Rome, Saint Almachius, martyr, who, by the command of Alipius, governor of the city, was killed by the gladiators for saying, 'Today is the Octave of our Lord's birth; put an end to the worship of idols, and abstain from unclean sacrifices.'

Thus Saint Telemachus, who is also known as Almachius, was stoned to death in Rome eight days after the Nativity of Christ, which is January 1st, in the year 404. This tragedy fueled the emperor to ban this spectacle in the Roman Empire for good.

It is true that Constantine the Great, many years previously, had issued decrees making illegal such great evils as abortion, infanticide, crucifixion, and gladiatorial games. But many of these great evils are very difficult to extirpate, and often their demonic heads pop up again and again in history. The great Orthodox Christian poet and Latin hymn writer, Aurelius Prudentius Clemens, in his work *Contra Symmachi Orationem* delivered against the influence of the Pagan Senator and Magistrate Symmachus (who was well-known for representing the forces of Pagan tradition, including the bloody gladiatorial games), castigates these great evils, saying: "What ravages other to itself does the impious art of the game will, what deaths of young men, what pleasure by blood nourished?"

Prudentius, however, much later, shows praise for the Emperor Honorius:

He forbade the City to be stained by the blood of bulls, "You shall prohibit to be offered the deaths of unhappy men, not one in the City may fall, the pleasure of which may be pain, nor may its own maidenhood delight countenances by slaughters, now the infamous arena contented by alone wild beasts, let no more homicides entertain in bloodstained arms."

Thus for nearly eighty years Christian rulers, hierarchs and clergy could not put an end to this bloody spectacle, until a foreign ascetic came to Rome and put his life on the line and lost it in the name of Christ and the peace He brought to the world. Saint Telemachus could have truly spoken the words of the Apostle James (2:8): "Truly, a man may say, 'You have faith, and I have works.' Show me your faith

without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works.” (from *johnsanidopoulos.com*)

Venerable Fanchea of Rossory

St. Fanchea (Garbh) of Rossory was a daughter of Conall the Red prince of Oriel, in Ulster, and his wife Briga. She founded a convent at Rossory in Fermanagh (Ulster), and was instrumental in her brother St. Enda of Arran's (commemorated March 21) decision to embrace monastic life. She reposed towards the end of the sixth century and was buried in Killane. (from *drjohnhutchinsonhall.com*)

Also Commemorated Today

New Hieromartyr Jeremiah (1918).

New Hieromartyrs Platon, bishop of Revel, Estonia and Priests Michael and Nicholas (1919).

New Hieromartyrs Alexander archbishop of Samara and with him John, Alexander, John, Alexander, Trophime, Viacheslav, Basil and James priests (1938).

Martyr Basil (layman) of Ancyra (ca. 362).

St. Emelia, mother of Sts. Macrina, Basil the Great and Gregory of Nyssa (375).

St. Gregory, bishop of Nazianzus (374) and father of St. Gregory the Theologian. Martyr Theodosios.

Venerable Theodosios of Tryglia, abbot.

St. Fulgentius (Fulgence), bishop of Ruspe in North Africa (533) (North Africa).

New Martyr Peter of the Peloponnesus (1776) (Greek).

St. Eugendus (Oyend), abbot of Condat in the Jura Mountains (510).

St. Clarus (Clair) of Vienne, abbot (ca. 660) (Gaul).

St. Beoc, Abbot of Lough Derg in Donegal, Ireland (Beanus, Dabeoc, Mobeoc) (5th or 6th c.)

St. Connat, Virgin (Comnatan) Abbess of Saint Brigid's convent in Kildare (c. 590)

St. Cuan, Abbot (Mochua, Moncain) (6th c.)

St. Elvan (2nd Bishop of London) (2nd c.)

St. Mydwyn (Medwin), confessor (2nd c.)

St. Maelrhys, Confessor of Bardsey Island, Wales (6th c.)

Metropolitan Peter Mogila of Kiev (Carpatho-Rus) (1646)

St. Gwenhoel, son of King Seithenin of Wales (6th c.)

St. Felix, bishop of Bourges (576) (Gaul)

Mochua (Cronan), Monk of Balla Monastery in Connaught, Ireland (637)

St. Basil of Arles, bishop of Aix en Provence (c. 475)

St. Concordius of Spoleto, subdeacon and martyr (175) (Italy)

St. Justin of Chieti, bishop (c. 540) (Italy)

St. William of Dijon, monk (1031) (Italy)
St. Basil, second Bishop of Aix en Provence (c. 475)
Ven. Demet, hermit of Plozévet, Brittany (4th c.)
30 soldier-martyrs of Rome (c. 304)
Martyrs Argyrus, Felix, Narcissus, Victor, and 4 others (N. Africa)

Social Team for January 8

Team 4 is up next week - Vallandingham, Tony Papadakis, Andrew and Katy, Joseph Frey. 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.

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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.)