

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: Vespers 5 PM

Sunday: Matins 8:45 AM

Sunday School 9:30 AM

Divine Liturgy 10 AM

**November 26, 2023 – 26th Sunday After Pentecost |
Holy Prophet Zephaniah**

You previously cried out for Zion to rejoice exceedingly, now Zephaniah rejoices standing next to God. On the third Zephaniah passed from this life radiantly.

Zephaniah was the son of Cushi, a native of Mount Sarabatha, from the tribe of Simeon. He lived and prophesied in the seventh century before Christ, at the time of Josiah the pious king of Judah (641-610 B.C.). Zephaniah was also a contemporary of the Prophets Jeremiah and Habakkuk. Having great humility and a pure mind raised to God, he was found worthy of the grace of God to discern the future.

Under the two preceding kings of Judah, Amon and Manasseh, the cult of other deities (especially Baal and Astarte) had developed in the Holy City of Jerusalem, bringing with it elements of alien culture and morals. Josiah, a dedicated reformer, wished to put an end to perceived misuse of the holy places. One of the most zealous champions and advisers of this reform was Zephaniah, and his writing, which consists of only three chapters, remains one of the most important documents for the understanding of the era of Josiah.

The prophet spoke boldly against the religious and moral corruption, when, in view of the idolatry which had penetrated even into the sanctuary, he warned that God



would "destroy out of this place the remnant of Baal, and the names of the ... priests" (Zeph. 1:4), and pleaded for a return to the simplicity of their fathers instead of the luxurious foreign clothing which was worn especially in aristocratic circles (1:8). He saw Jerusalem as a filthy and polluted and oppressing city. Her princes within her were roaring lions; her judges were evening wolves; her prophets were treacherous persons, her priests polluted the sanctuary, doing violence to the Law (Zeph. 3:1-4). Zephaniah prophesied the day of the wrath of God and the punishment of Gaza, Ashkalon, Ashdod, Ekron, Nineveh, Jerusalem and Egypt.

Foreseeing the advent of the Messiah, he enthusiastically exclaimed: "Sing, O daughter of Zion; shout, O Israel; be glad and rejoice with all your heart, O daughter of Jerusalem" (Zeph. 3:14). Further he proclaimed that the gentiles will become the people of God when the Messiah comes, and that the Messiah will be the judge of all rational creatures, giving to all according to their works.

This seer of mysteries entered into rest at his birthplace to await the General Resurrection and his reward from God. His name is commonly transliterated Sophonias in Bibles translated from the Latin Vulgate or Septuagint. The name might mean "Yahweh has concealed", "[he whom] Yahweh has hidden", or "Yahweh lies in wait." He is numbered among the so-called Minor Prophets. *(from johnsanidopoulos.com)*

Today's Epistle Lesson – St. Paul's Letter to the Ephesians 5:9-19 EOB

Brethren, the fruit of the Spirit is in all [manner of] goodness, righteousness and truth. Discern what is well-pleasing to the Lord! Have no fellowship with the vain works of darkness, but rather, expose them for what they are. It is a shame even to speak about the things which these people do in secret! But all things are revealed when they are exposed to the light. Therefore, it is said: Awake, you sleeper, arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you. Therefore, watch carefully how you live, not as unwise, but as wise [people], making good use of time, because the days are evil. Do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. Do not get drunk with wine – this is reckless living – but be filled with the Spirit. Speak to one another in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs! Sing and chant to the Lord in your heart.

Today's Gospel Lesson – Saint Luke 18:18-27 EOB

At that time, certain ruler asked him, "Good Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" Jesus asked him, "Why do you call me good? No one is good, except one - God. You know the commandments: 'Do not commit adultery,' 'Do not murder,' 'Do not steal,' 'Do not bear false witness,' 'Honor your father and

your mother.” The ruler replied, “I have observed all these things from my youth.” When Jesus heard this, he said, “You still lack one thing. Sell all that you have, distribute it to the poor, and you will have a treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.” But when the man heard these things, he became very distressed because he was very rich. Jesus, seeing that he had become very distressed, said, “How hard it is for those who have wealth to enter into the Kingdom of God! Indeed, it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for someone who is wealthy to enter into the Kingdom of God!” Those who heard this exclaimed, “Then, who can be saved?” But Jesus replied, “The things which are impossible with men are possible with God.”

Homily on the Beatitudes 6

By Metropolitan Hierotheos of Nafpaktos and Agiou Vlasiou

"Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God" (Matt. 5:8).

The beatitude of purity of heart is very important and is at the center not only of the Beatitudes, but of the entire spiritual life. With purity of heart people know God, they see God.

Purity of heart, so that a person can know God, is at the center of Orthodox theology as well as so-called neptic-hesychastic theology, expressed especially by Saint Symeon the New Theologian, Saint Gregory Palamas and the Fathers of the *Philokalia*, the so-called Philokalic Fathers.

First, this beatitude has particular importance, because there are people who do not steal nor take the property of others, and may even be merciful, applying to their person the beatitude "Blessed are the merciful," yet they have unclean hearts and commit various carnal sins. Thus, the most important of all is for a person to have a pure heart.

Very often in Holy Scripture there are words spoken of the heart. It does not mean the physical heart, but the "deep heart", as the Psalmist says [Ps. 64:6 (63:7)]. Indeed, many times in the Psalms of David there is reference to the heart, saying it is "fervent", it "overflows", it "leaps", etc.

Studying the texts of Holy Scripture and the Fathers of the Church, as well as discussing this issue with empirical monks, I have found that what is called the "heart" is the passive part of the soul, and this spiritual heart is deep within the physical heart. The Fathers, following on this point the philosophical division of the soul, speak of an intelligent, desiring and incensive part of the soul. The intelligent, which produces thoughts, acts in the brain, while the desiring and incensive parts of the soul manifest in the physical organ of the heart. When someone loves or is enraged, this is manifested in the physical organ of the heart.

Thus, when the Neptic Fathers speak of the purification of the heart, basically they mean the return of love and anger from the creations of God.

People usually love creation and other people passionately, which is an impurity of the heart, because then the whole heart is distinguished by passion. A person, however, that struggles to live according to God, to apply the commandments of God, such a person loves God, acquiring divine eros and, of course, loves as God loves. This is what the purification of the heart from the passions is. According to the spiritual medicine of the Fathers we know that the passions are not some evil forces of the soul that must be weeded out, but are natural powers of the soul that have become distorted, and through the Grace of God and our effort we can transform them and turn them towards God.

Thus, reason is one thing and the heart is another. Reason processes thoughts which are called logismoi, because they have to stay there and help people to move, to think, to work and to behave accordingly, while the heart loves God, as well as creation within the love of God. Reason develops science and philosophy, while the heart experiences God. This is why we say that the fruits of science are the discoveries of reason, and the empirical knowledge of God is the revelation of God to the pure heart of a person, namely the heart that has got rid of logismoi and passionate acts and is completely dedicated to God.

It makes an impression also that Christ in this beatitude doesn't say that the pure in heart will know God, but will *see* God. In the heart, according the Neptic Fathers, is the spiritual eye that sees God, it is a spiritual mirror to which the true God is revealed as Light, it is the nous, the eye of the soul. When God appears to people, He is always seen as Light. This is what took place on Mount Tabor, this is what happened with the archdeacon and protomartyr Stephen. This Light came forth from Christ when He appeared to the Apostle Paul, this is the Light seen by Saint Symeon the New Theologian, and many other saints.

The revelation of God as Light offers spiritual knowledge, and this knowledge is Orthodox theology. This is why academic theology of the reason is different from the charismatic and empirical theology associated with the spiritual heart.

We have to continuously beg God, as David wrote in the 50th Psalm: "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit in my inward parts" [Ps. 50 (51):12]. (*from johnsanidopoulos.com*)

A Word From the Holy Fathers

It is necessary and beneficial for a general self-examination to take place from time to time, remembering all former sins.

Leave all your concerns to the hands of God. Ask for whatever you want, like a child asking from its father. Prayer is a gift from God. Always ask with hope.

Question: How do you manage to have such patience and perseverance in everything? Answer: The grace of God helps. I always believe in the power of God, my child, Who alters and adjusts everything for the benefit of our soul.

Take communion regularly, pray warmly, be patient and you will see a strong hand holding you. Christ is near us even if we don't see Him. Sometimes, from his great love, He gives us a slap too. You should be glad. Jesus holds an artists' chisel in His hands. He wants to make a statue of you, for the Heavenly Palace.

— St. Amphilochios of Patmos

St. Attala, Abbess in Strasbourg

Saint St. Attala (Attalia, Athalia, Attale) was the daughter of Alsatian Duke Adalbert and his wife Gerlind, and niece of St. Odilia. She was educated by St. Odilia in her monastery Hohenbourg, and was a model of piety and charity, and was much loved. About 720, her father built the Abbey of St. Stephen in Strasbourg and she was elected abbess. She reposed in 741, and was widely mourned at her passing. Her body was exhibited for many weeks for veneration by pilgrims. The abbess of Hohenbourg, Werendtrude, wanted a relic of St. Attala so badly that she hired a thief to cut off one of her hands and bring it back to her. The thief was caught in the act, and the hand was kept and enclosed in a reliquary. Many miracles occurred in its presence. It can still be found in St. Stephen's Church in Strasbourg. (*adapted from heiligenlexikon-de and happy-strasbourg.eu*)

Also Commemorated Today

Venerable [Sabbas](#), abbot of [Zvenigorod](#), disciple of St. Sergius of Radonezh (1406).

New Hieromartyr [Andrew](#) Kosovsky, priest (1920).

New Hieromartyr [Nicholas](#) Ershov, priest (1937).

St. [Gregory](#) Sedov, confessor (1960).

Venerable [Theodulus](#), [eparch](#) of Constantinople (440).

Venerable [John](#) the [Silent](#) of St. Sabbas' monastery (558).

Hieromartyr [Theodore](#), [archbishop](#) of Alexandria (606).

Venerable [George](#) of Cernica (*Romania*).

Holy Martyrs [Agapios](#), Seleukos and Mamas

New Hieromartyr [Gabriel](#), bishop of [Ganos](#) (1659) (*Greek*).

St. [Birin](#), [bishop](#) of Dorchester (649-650) (*Celtic & British*).

+New Martyr [Angelos](#) of Chios (1813) (*Greek*).

Monk-martyr [Cosmas](#) of St. Anne's Skete, Mt. Athos. (1760)

St. [Sola](#) (Suolo), Anglo-Saxon missionary priest under St. Boniface (c. 794) (*Germany*).

St. [Theodulos](#) the Fool-for-Christ of Cyprus
St. [Ethernan](#) of Scotland.
St. [Abbo](#), bishop of Auxerre (c. 860)
Martyr [Agricola](#) (Hungary)
Martyr [Cassian](#) of Tangiers (298)
Martyrs [Claudius](#), Crispin, Magina, John, and Stephen of N. Africa (unk)
St. [Eloque](#) (Eloquius), abbot of the Abbey of Saint-Pierre de Lagne (c. 666)
St. [Mirocles](#), bishop of Milan (c. 316)

Social Team for December 10

Team 3 – Edgington, Barzykin, Wright. Thank you!

Distinguished Diocesan Donors Program

Dear Diocesan Clergy, Faithful and Friends,

Glory to Jesus Christ!

On this day of Thanksgiving to Almighty God for his many blessings upon us as a Diocese, Parish and faithful, we invite you to offer thanks to God by supporting the vital ministries of our Diocese, most notably our Diocesan Youth Camp, Camp Nazareth and our Information Technology Ministries.

For many years, our Diocese has asked its faithful to provide direct tangible support through our Distinguished Diocesan Donors Program. Thanks to your support we have been able to do great things to minister to the people of God, and especially our Youth through our amazing, state of the art, Youth camp, Camp Nazareth.

We are asking you, on this day for your continued support and if you have not already done so to make a sacrificial donation to the DDD Program for 2023. There are so many needs yet to be fulfilled that with your support can become a reality. You can do so by designating a portion of your church offering, or right now online by clicking here to donate through our secure donation portal, <https://www.justgiving.com/campaign/distinguisheddiocesandonors> .

Again, thank you for your past support and for your anticipated positive response to this request.

Sincerely Yours in Christ,

The Diocesan Chancery Staff.

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Diocesan Website: <http://www.acrod.org>

Camp Nazareth: <http://www.campnazareth.org>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/acroddiocese>

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/acrodnews>

You Tube: <https://youtube.com/acroddiocese>

In Your Prayers – Please Remember... His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch BARTHOLOMEW, His Eminence Metropolitan GREGORY, Fr. Joseph & Family, His Grace Bishop Neofitos of Nyeri & Mt. Kenya, Bennett family, Tatyana & Slava Chumak & family, Luke & Marlena Cooper, Roberta Corson, 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, David & Kathryn Newman, Bobby Nutter & family, Nicholas Pavlik, Weston Perry & family, John Reece, Mary Reed, Marge Rusnak, Rose Song, Jacob, 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.)