

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

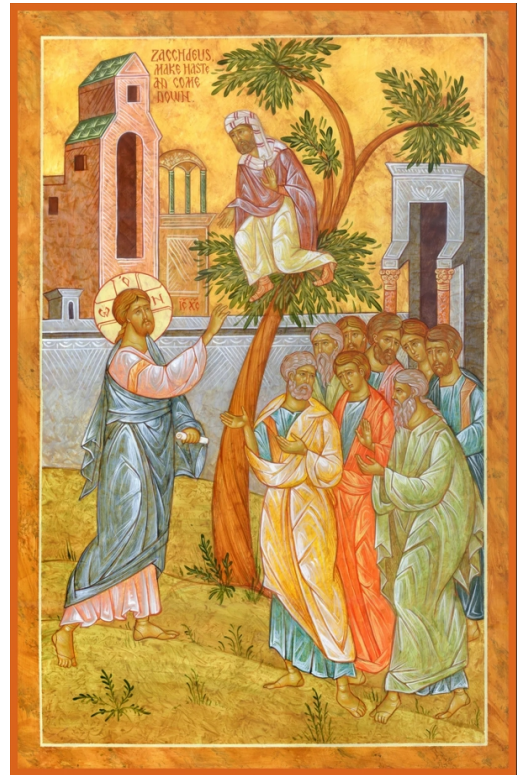
Divine Liturgy 10:00 AM

February 18, 2024 – Sunday of Zacchaeus

By St. Luke the Surgeon, Bishop of Simferopol

Our Lord Jesus Christ walked through the city of Jericho. As always, He was accompanied by a huge crowd of people. The chief of the publicans, Zacchaeus, lived in Jericho at that time. Tax collectors were called publicans, who in those days were cruel people: they robbed the people, collecting taxes so that most of the money remained for themselves.

The people hated them and considered them grave sinners. And so, this sinful man Zacchaeus was inflamed with a desire to see the Lord Jesus Christ, about whom he had heard much. Zacchaeus was very short and therefore climbed a tree to see the Lord from there. When the Lord reached the tree on which Zacchaeus was sitting, He stopped and said: “Zacchaeus, make haste and come down, for today I must stay at your house.” Zacchaeus quickly climbed down from the tree and began to run home to receive the Lord Jesus Christ. When the Lord was in his house, people grumbled at Him, saying: “Why did He come to the house of such a notorious sinner?” And Zacchaeus, shocked by Christ’s visit, stood before Him and said: “Lord, I will give half of my property to the poor, and if I have offended anyone, I will repay him fourfold” (Luke 19:5, 7–8).



What did the Lord Jesus Christ answer? “Today salvation has come to this house, for he also is a son of Abraham; for the Son of Man came to seek and to save that which was lost” (Luke 19:9–10).

Let us delve into this Gospel narrative. Why did the Lord, walking with a huge crowd of people, suddenly turn His attention to Zacchaeus? Why did He call him by name? The fact that the Lord called him by name, having never seen him before, is not surprising, for the righteous also had knowledge of the names of people whom they saw for the first time.

Venerable Seraphim of Sarov called people by name whom he had never seen before. Elder Ambrose of Optina also called out by name from the crowd some peasant woman who had come for the first time from afar. And if the saints, who possessed a small grain of divine omniscience thanks to their great deeds, knew the names of people whom they had never seen before, then does the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Omniscient, not know the names of all people? He knows not only the name, but also the heart of every person, and he knew Zacchaeus not only by name, but as the Omniscient God knew his heart, thoughts, desires. That is why He stopped, that is why He said to Zacchaeus: “Make haste and come down, for today I must stay at your house,” precisely because He knew the soul of this man.

What was going on in this soul? Why did Zacchaeus run forward with such passionate curiosity and climb a fig tree to look at least from afar at the Lord Jesus Christ? Because his sinful conscience was deeply alarmed by what he heard about Christ. He heard about the greatest prophet the world had ever seen. He thought in his heart: “How can I, such a cursed sinner, live such a life that people hate and despise me?”

And in this disposition of his shocked soul, he climbed up the fig tree and looked at the Lord Jesus Christ. And the Lord knew what a turning point had occurred in his sinful soul, he knew that this soul was ready for the most complete repentance, that this soul would not be difficult to save. That is why He came to Zacchaeus' house.

This divine visit to the house of Zacchaeus shocked the soul of this sinful man even more: How has the Lord Jesus Christ Himself come to me, such a cursed sinner, despised by people! And he immediately renounced his love of money and said: “Lord, I will give half of my property to the poor, and if I have offended anyone, I will repay him fourfold.” That is why the Lord Jesus Christ said to him: “Today salvation has come to this house, for he too is a son of Abraham.”

You know that the Lord saved more than one sinner, Zacchaeus, you know that robbers and harlots followed Him. Did you hear how the harlot washed His feet with her tears and wiped His head with her hair and poured precious ointment on

His feet? Do you know that to the terrible thief crucified next to Him on the cross, who said: “Remember me, Lord, when you come into Your kingdom,” the Lord answered: “Today you will be with Me in Paradise” (Luke 23:42–43)?

The Lord came to seek and save the lost, to seek and save not only those lost who surrounded Him many years ago - He came to seek and save all who are lost among us, for among us there are many who are perishing and lost, and among us there are grave sinners, like Zacchaeus.

Our Lord Jesus Christ came to save everyone. He stands at the heart of each of us, and knocks, and humbly asks us to let Him into our hearts. He stops for each of us, calls us by name and calls us to repentance, and saves us.

There are many among us who have sinned gravely, whose spiritual garments are full of stench, sinners who consider themselves unworthy to look at the Cross of Christ, do not dare to enter the holy temple, considering themselves lost, doomed, believing that no one will save them and that Christ will turned away from them.

Well, is this true? No! This is completely untrue. The Lord does not turn away from anyone. He said: “He who comes to Me I will never cast out” (John 6:37). The Lord Jesus Christ said about Himself: “I am the Good Shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.”

For all of us, sick, black sheep, the Lord laid down His life on the Cross of Golgotha. “I am the Good Shepherd, and I know Mine, and Mine know Me” (John 10:14), - I know those whom I will save, I know those unfortunate ones who tremble, who consider themselves doomed. Let them know that I am the Good Shepherd and I lay down My life for the sheep.

The holy prophet Ezekiel in the 34th chapter of his book contains a formidable denunciation of unworthy priests who feed on the milk of sheep and clothe themselves with their wool, but do not care about the sheep. And so, in a formidable accusatory speech against unworthy shepherds, God, through the mouth of the holy prophet Ezekiel, says: “I will feed My sheep: and I will give them rest, says the Lord God. I will find the lost, and bring back the stolen, and bandage the wounded, and strengthen the sick, and destroy the fat and violent; I will shepherd them with righteousness” (Ezek.34:15–16).

The Lord Himself, God Himself, takes care of His sheep, He Himself will go to shepherd them if the shepherds are careless. The Lord Jesus Christ is the Good Shepherd, who laid the sick sheep on His shoulders and carried them.

This is what we all must remember, we all must know that the Lord came to seek and save the lost. No one should fall into despair, no one should consider salvation

impossible for themselves. The Lord Jesus Christ, in a huge crowd, turned His gaze to the sinful Zacchaeus.

The Lord Jesus Christ is now here among us, for He said: “Where two or three are gathered in My name, there am I in the midst of them” (Matthew 18:20). And now the Lord Jesus Christ is among us, as He was among the crowd when He walked through the city of Jericho.

And now the Lord looks into your hearts, and looks at those who accidentally came to church today. The Lord calls them by name: “Maria, quickly go home, for I need to be with you today, for you are also a Christian, salvation has come to you too.” *(from johnsanidopoulos.com)*

Today’s Epistle Lesson – St. Paul’s First Letter to Timothy 4:9-15 EOB

My son Timothy, this saying is faithful and worthy of all acceptance. For this purpose, we work hard and experience rejection, because we have placed our trust in the living God who is the Savior of all, especially of those who believe. Command and teach these things. Let no one despise your youth, but be an example for those who believe: in speech, in your way of life, in love, in spirit, in faith, and in purity. Until I come, devote yourself to public reading, encouragement and teaching. Do not neglect the gift that is in you, which was given to you by prophecy with the laying on of the hands of the council of presbyters. Be attentive in these things. Give yourself to them completely, so that your progress may be manifest to all.

Today’s Gospel Lesson – Saint Luke 19:1-10 EOB

At that time, Jesus entered Jericho and was passing through town. There was a man named Zacchaeus who was a chief tax collector, and he was rich. He was trying to see who Jesus was, and could not because of the crowd, because he was short. He ran on ahead and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see Jesus who was [about] to pass that way. When Jesus came to the place, he looked up, saw Zacchaeus, and said to him, “Zacchaeus, hurry and come down, for today I must stay at your house!” He hurried, came down, and received Jesus with joy. But when the people saw it, they all grumbled, saying, “He has gone in to stay with a man who is a sinner!” Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, “Behold, Lord, half of my goods I give to the poor. And if I have wrongfully obtained money from anyone, I restore four times as much!” Then Jesus said to him, “Today, salvation has come to this house, because he, too, is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost.”

A Word From the Holy Fathers

Dear friends, at every moment the earth is full of the mercy of God, and nature itself is a lesson for all the faithful in the worship of God. The heavens, the sea and all that is in them bear witness to the goodness and omnipotence of their Creator, and the marvelous beauty of the elements as they obey Him demands from the intelligent creation a fitting expression of its gratitude.

But with the return of the season marked out in a special way by the mystery of our redemption, and of the days that lead up to the paschal feast, we are summoned more urgently to prepare ourselves by a purification of spirit.

The special note of the paschal feast is this: the whole Church rejoices in the forgiveness of sins. It rejoices in the forgiveness not only of those who are then reborn in holy baptism but also of those who are already numbered among God's adopted children.

Initially, men are made new by the rebirth of baptism. Yet there is still required a daily renewal to repair the shortcomings of our mortal nature, and whatever degree of progress has been made there is no one who should not be more advanced. All must therefore strive to ensure that on the day of redemption no one may be found in the sins of his former life.

Dear friends, what the Christian should be doing at all times should be done now with greater care and devotion, so that the Lenten fast enjoined by the apostles may be fulfilled, not simply by abstinence from food but above all by the renunciation of sin.

There is no more profitable practice as a companion to holy and spiritual fasting than that of almsgiving. This embraces under the single name of mercy many excellent works of devotion, so that the good intentions of all the faithful may be of equal value, even where their means are not. The love that we owe both God and man is always free from any obstacle that would prevent us from having a good intention. The angels sang, "Glory to God in the highest, and peace to His people on earth." The person who shows love and compassion to those in any kind of affliction is blessed, not only with the virtue of good will but also with the gift of peace.

The works of mercy are innumerable. Their very variety brings this advantage to those who are true Christians, that in the matter of almsgiving not only the rich and affluent but also those of average means and the poor are able to play their part. Those who are unequal in their capacity to give can be equal in the love within their hearts.

– St. Leo the Great

Saint Leo the Great, Pope of Rome

The soul of the divine Leo was released, and demonic hordes he struck with fear.

On the eighteenth Leo released his soul.

Our Holy Father Leo flourished during the reign of Emperor Marcian (450-457). Due to his extraordinary wisdom and purity, and the simplicity and blamelessness of his life, he was ordained Bishop of Old Rome by the grace of the Holy Spirit. He was a venerable shepherd over his flock, and the blasphemies of the heretics he perfectly obliterated in the days of the Fourth Ecumenical Synod, at which six hundred and thirty Fathers gathered in Chalcedon in the year 451. He expounded and dogmatized on many things of the Orthodox faith, and mightily overthrew the doctrines of those heretics who taught the nonsense that Christ our God had one nature, one energy and one will.

Because those who are hated by God fought against the truth, and they actively employed themselves to ravage the divinely inspired doctrines of the divine Fathers, for this reason this blessed man submitted to the request offered by the entire Synod, and he occupied himself for many days with fasting and vigils and prayer. Wherefore inspired by the life-creating Spirit, he set out and lay down in writing concerning the issues that were being discussed. He proclaimed with clarity the two natures and two energies and wills of Christ our God, and by means of a letter he sent it to the above mentioned Fourth Ecumenical Synod. There it was received by the multitude of venerable Fathers gathered together, and it was considered to be a pillar of Orthodoxy, and they believed that it came from the mouth of God. Therefore this Holy Synod rested on this, and they resisted with greater courage the multitude of Monophysites, as well as Monothelites, and it dissolved their intricate wiles. And when that Holy Synod dissolved, the divinely sweet Leo continued to live in this present life, and as a luminary his virtues shined, and he departed to the Lord in deep old age. *(from johnsanidopoulos.com)*

The Mystery of Unction

Metropolitan Hierotheos of Nafpaktos and Agiou Vlasiou

One of the ways in which the Grace of God transforms people, my beloved brethren, is the mystery of Unction, which is celebrated every Great Wednesday in the sacred church as the best preparation for the Divine Communion of Great Thursday - which is an important day because then the Secret Supper was given - but it is also performed whenever the believer wishes. For this reason the Christian sometimes invites the priest to his house. It is a sacramental act that shows the love of the Church for man.

The Brother of God James in his Catholic epistle refers to the performance of the mystery of Holy Unction, when he writes: "Is anyone among you sick? Let him

call for the presbyters of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven" (James 5:14-15). Analyzing this apostolic verse we observe what is the purpose of the mystery and how it is performed.

It is first performed by the Presbyters of the Church who hold the priesthood. Then it is done mainly for the sick, who suffer from a long-term problem and seek healing from God. Also, the mystery of Unction forgives some unknown sins that we commit every day. These are not great sins, for which Confession is needed, but the so-called pardonable sins, because the mystery of Unction cannot be a replacement and substitution for the mystery of repentance and Holy Confession. Moreover, the energy of the Grace of God through the mystery takes place to the degree of the faith of the one who comes to this mystery. And finally, Holy Unction, as the word for it in Greek, *Euchelion*, states, consists of prayer and oil. That is, the priest prays to sanctify the oil and then anoints the body of the sick with the oil.

The mystery of Holy Unction reveals the love of the Church for the sick who suffer from various diseases. Disease is a terrible condition in man, a fact that is due to our mortal and impassioned nature. As we know from Orthodox teaching, the human body was not created with disease, but the disease then came as a result of the sin of Adam and Eve. Our mortal and impassioned nature creates all diseases in the human body. God, of course, enlightens doctors to find ways of healing, but where human science cannot intervene, God intervenes. And many times we see many such miraculous operations.

The Church with the mystery of Unction, as with all the mysteries, aims at the healing and salvation of the whole man, which consists of soul and body. Man does not consist only of soul, nor only of body, but of both, that is, of soul and body. And, of course, there is an interdependence between the two. When the soul is sick, it also affects the body. And when the body is sick, it affects the soul in various degrees and in different ways. Of course, it is possible for the body, as mortal and impassioned, to suffer, but the soul is healthy, and sometimes the greater the physical illness, the deeper the health of the soul. But, of course, in the Church we do not overlook either the soul or the body.

In the prayers of the mystery of Unction there are two phrases that always impress me. One is "and dispel every latent disease". We ask God to cure every disease that we do not know about at that moment. If one understands that cancer is a disease that develops in the body long before it appears, then one understands this phrase. And many times God heals us from such latent diseases, before they manifest, that

is why we must thank God for the benefits we do not know. And the second phrase is: "remember not the sins of our youth Lord". There are sins that we committed in our youth and we ignore them because we forgot them. We ask God to heal them so that we do not find them before us at the Second Coming of Christ.

Let us be moved by the love and interest of our Church for both physical illnesses and the illnesses of the soul. *(from johnsanidopoulos.com)*

The "Good Friday" of Russian Monasticism (17-18 Feb. 1932)

A special place in the history of the Russian Orthodox Church in the twentieth century is occupied by the event, which was named the "Good Friday of Russian Monasticism." On one night from 17 to 18 February 1932, hundreds of monks and nuns were arrested, thrown into prison and subsequently sent into exile. These were primarily from monasteries in the northwestern region of Russia: Makarievskaya Hermitage, Alexander Nevsky Lavra, and the monasteries of Ioannovsky, Novodevichy Voskresensky, Vokhonovsky, Pyatogorsky, Kashinsky, Staroladozhsky. On this day, the following were arrested, and later numbered among the saints - Sts. Arefa Mitrenin, Lev Egorov, Maria Lelyanova and Patrick Petrov. At the moment, there is information there were about 273 monastics and 45 brothers and sisters. This is not a complete list. The arrests continued, and on April 17 and 18 of the same year, more than 200 people were arrested.

Anatoly Emmanuilovich Krasnov-Levitin, a Russian writer, an emigrant, wrote in his memoirs about this terrible day: "... a bright and terrible day has come, the Good Friday of Russian monasticism, unnoticed by anyone and now almost unknown to anyone - February 18, 1932, when all of Russian monasticism disappeared to the camps overnight. On February 18 in Leningrad there were arrested: 40 monks from the Alexander Nevsky Lavra ..., 12 monks from the Feodorovsky Cathedral, 8 monks from 'Kinovia', a branch of the Alexander Nevsky Lavra beyond Bolshaya Okhta, monks and nuns from various closed monasteries living in Leningrad - hundreds. A total of 318 people. All the brothers of the Makaryeva Hermitage were arrested and brought to St. Petersburg ... All were sent to the Kazakh Territory." *(from johnsanidopoulos.com)*

Also Commemorated Today

New Hieromartyrs Alexander (Medvedsky) (1932) priest & Benjamin hieromonk (1938).

New Hieromartyr [Vladimir](#) priest (1933).

Virgin-martyr [Anna](#) (1940).

Venerable [Cosmas](#), monk, of Yakhromsk (1492).

St. [Agapitus](#), bishop of Synnada in Phrygia, confessor (4th c.).

St. [Flavian](#) the Confessor, patriarch of Constantinople (449).

Martyrs Victor, Dorotheus, Theodulus, & Agrippa, who suffered under Licinius (4th c.).
Martyr [Pioulios](#) (unk)
++St. [Colman](#), bishop of Lindisfarne (676) (Celtic & British).
Martyrs [Leo](#) and Parigorius of Patara of Lycia (258) (Greek).
St. Blaise, monk of Mt. Athos (9th c.).
St. [Nicholas](#) The Catholicos of Georgia (1591) (Georgia).
St [Ethelina](#) of Gloucestershire (Eudelme, possibly Adelina) (unk)
St. [Angilbert](#) (Engelbert), abbot of St. Riquier (814) (France)
St. [Helladius](#) of Toledo, archbishop (632) (Spain)
Martyrs [Lucius](#), Silvanus, Rutulus, Classicus, Secundinus, Fructulus, and Maximus (unk) (N. Africa)
Martyrs [Maximus](#), Claudius, Praepedigna, Alexander and Cutias of Rome (295)
St. [Riwan](#), disciple of St. Malo (Lanrivain, Brittany)(6th c.)

Social Team for February 25

Team 6 is up next week – Gabriela Howl, Shannon Johnson, Jameson Barker. Thank you!

Camp Nazareth

It's time to start thinking about summer camp! Registration for Camp will open on March 1, 2024 at 6pm. Before you register for Camp, please be sure to read the information on the camp website and be sure to attend one of the informational webinars scheduled for February 20 and February 22, 2024. On Tuesday, February 20th, 2024 (at 7pm EST) and Thursday, February 22nd, 2024 (at 7pm EST) (prior to Registration opening on March 1), Camp will offer two informational webinars (they are the same webinar, but are being offered twice) about the 2024 Summer Camping Weeks for all our campers, parents, clergy, volunteers and potential Staff. The webinars will include the latest information on our 2024 Summer Camping Weeks including information about the Camp's facility, kitchen, medical and program plans. If you miss the webinars you can access an archived version of one of them on the Camp registration page. All campers and their families are encouraged to attend the webinars, but especially any first-time campers and their families! Below are the links to register for the webinars:

https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_VJUThb8uQP-ai06glTq1Yg - 20th

https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_I_t1J-wkQSak0YOM3Zqy8A - 22nd

Our deanery will be attending Week 3, Sunday July 28 – Saturday, August 3, 2024. There is also a Science and Nature Camp available for everyone from August 4 – August 10, 2024. For further information, please visit the camp website at

<https://www.campnazareth.org/summercamp/register-for-camp/>

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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 & Marlana 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 & the Holy Land, and those in need of our prayers. (Please advise Fr. Joseph of changes.)