

# SOBORNOST

**St. Thomas the Apostle Orthodox Church**

**(301) 638-5035 Church  
4419 Leonardtown Road  
Waldorf, MD 20601**

**Very Rev. Father Joseph Edgington,  
Pastor**

**(703) 532-8017**

[fredgington@gmail.com](mailto:fredgington@gmail.com)

[www.apostlethomas.org](http://www.apostlethomas.org)

*American Carpatho-Russian Orthodox Diocese*

*ECUMENICAL PATRIARCHATE  
OF CONSTANTINOPLE*

## SERVICES

**Wed: Reader Vespers 6:30 PM**

**Saturday: Confession 4:30 PM  
Vespers 5 PM**

**Sunday: Matins 8:45 AM**

**Sunday School 9:30 AM**

**Divine Liturgy 10 AM**

**September 22, 2024 – 13<sup>th</sup> Sunday After Pentecost**

**Hieromartyr Phocas, Bishop of Sinope**

*The soap in the bath was divided in two for Phocas, so the bath became both a contest and a cleansing. \* On the twenty-second Phocas was killed in a bath.*

Saint Phocas was born in the city of Sinope on the coast of the Black Sea. His father was a shipbuilder called Pamphilius and his mother's name was Maria. From a young age he was made worthy to receive the grace of the Holy Spirit, and was able to work paradoxical miracles. He later became Bishop of Sinope, and brought many unbelievers to the light of divine knowledge, both by his inspired words and supernatural wonders. Till his last breath he taught the people and worked miracles.

The martyric end he was destined for was revealed to him by means of a strange sign. A dove came to him and sat on his head, placing a crown on it, and speaking in a human voice it said: "A cup is prepared for you that you must now drink." And the truth of this cup of martyrdom he was made worthy to drink from took place during the reign of Trajan, in the year 101.



Bishop Phocas was brought before the Governor Africanus and was questioned by him, and he in turn theologized and boldly taught him the faith in Christ the true God. Because Africanus dared to blaspheme Christ and torture the Saint, for this reason a great earthquake took place, violently striking the governor and his soldiers dead. But the Saint raised him from the dead, due to the pleadings of his wife.

After this the Saint was brought before Emperor Trajan. Because Phocas preached Christ, the Emperor had him flayed. Continuing to courageously confess Christ, he was then placed in asbestos. Lastly, he was placed in an overheated bath. There the courageous athlete handed his soul into the hands of God.

After his death Saint Phocas continued to work many miracles for those who called upon him with faith. His sacred relics were translated to Constantinople, Saint John Chrysostom preached a homily in his honor, and this event is celebrated by the Church on July 23rd. Later a monastery dedicated to Saint Phocas was established in Constantinople. The sacred skull of the Martyr is located in Xenophontos Monastery at Mount Athos, and other portions of his relics can be found in Stavronikita Monastery at Mount Athos and Panagia Soumela Monastery in Vermio. *(from johnsanidopoulos.com)*

### **Today's Epistle Lesson – St. Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians 16:13-24 EOB**

Brethren, watch, stand fast in the faith, be brave, be strong. Let all *that you do* be done with love. I urge you, brethren—you know the household of Stephanas, that it is the firstfruits of Achaia, and *that* they have devoted themselves to the ministry of the saints—that you also submit to such, and to everyone who works and labors with *us*. I am glad about the coming of Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus, for what was lacking on your part they supplied. For they refreshed my spirit and yours. Therefore acknowledge such men. The churches of Asia greet you. Aquila and Priscilla greet you heartily in the Lord, with the church that is in their house. All the brethren greet you. Greet one another with a holy kiss. The salutation with my own hand—Paul's. If anyone does not love the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema. O Lord, come! The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ *be* with you. My love *be* with you all in Christ Jesus. Amen.

### **Today's Gospel Lesson – Saint Luke 5:1-11 EOB**

At that time, it happened, while the multitude pressed on him and heard the word of God, that he was standing by the lake of Gennesaret. He saw two boats standing by the lake, but the fishermen had gone out of them and they were washing their nets. Jesus entered into one of the boats, which was Simon's, and asked him to put out a little from the land. He sat down and taught the multitudes from the boat.

When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, “Put out into the deep, and let down your nets for a catch.” Simon answered him, “Master, we worked all night and took nothing! But at your word, I will let down the net.” When they had done this, they caught a great multitude of fish, and their net was breaking. They beckoned to their partners in the other boat to come and help them. They came and filled both boats, so [much] that they began to sink. But when Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus’ knees, saying, “Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, Lord!” He and all who were with him were amazed at their catch of fish; and so also were James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. Jesus said to Simon, “Do not be afraid! From now on, you will be catching people alive.” When they had brought their boats to shore, they left everything and followed him.

## **Homily on the Sunday After the Elevation of the Cross**

By Metropolitan Hierotheos of Nafpaktos and Agiou Vlasiou

*"And when he had ceased speaking, He said to Simon, 'Return to the depths and let down your nets for a catch'" (Luke 5:4).*

Beloved brethren,

With today's Sunday begins a long period in the Church, during which passages from the Gospel of the Evangelist Luke will be read every Sunday and this will happen until the Sunday before the Nativity of Christ.

The Gospel written by the Evangelist Luke has some particularities that distinguish it from the other Gospels, because it shows more of Christ's love for the poor, the despised, women, children, sinners, and it has a universal character within it, since it shows the interest of Christ in both Jews and Gentiles. A medical terminology is also used, since it comes from the Evangelist Luke, who was a doctor by profession.

In today's Gospel reading, the calling of the first Disciples is presented as a theme, and this was done on the occasion of the miraculous catching of the fish. The fishermen hadn't caught any fish all night and were washing their nets. Christ entered one of the ships belonging to Simon Peter and began to teach the people. As soon as He finished his teaching, He told Simon Peter to return to the depths of the lake and cast the nets again. Simon Peter, because he knew as a fisherman that this could not have a result, raised an objection, but finally obeyed and collected many fish. This filled him with awe and Christ called him and the sons of Zebedee, James and John, to follow Him, as it happened.

Therefore, this "return to the depths" that was said after He finished his discourse is of great importance. That's how it should be for us with a different, of course,

meaning. We notice in our days that all of the modern life and activity of man moves externally, man's attention remains on the surface.

First of all, an intense sensuality prevails, a satisfaction of the senses with the enjoyment of pleasure. Everywhere the image, the news, information and enjoyment dominates. A "virtual reality" dominates our life, which is a false and illusory pleasure. Happiness is also associated with sensuality. In the best of cases, people deal with the logical processing of concepts, words, images, which is characterized as logicocracy (only focus on logic) which is connected to imagination (fantasy).

Of course, we cannot reject the world of the senses and logic, but we cannot reduce them to authorities, by isolating them from the whole life of man. The senses are one thing and sensualism is another; logic is another and logicocracy is another; right reason is another and rationality is another.

Unfortunately, this preoccupation with the surface is also observed in church life. We are overly concerned with what is seen, we like the external decorations, the external activities, which is called activism, and we are not concerned with the depth of our life which is in the mind, in the heart, in God, in our salvation, in our eternal future. Therefore, the words of Christ "return to the depths" have a lot of meaning in our days.

First of all, it must be emphasized that Christ said these words when He finished his discourse, which means we hear and read the words of Christ and the saints. And this is necessary in an era where people's arguments, from various directions, distract us and disorient us. Thus, after we keep the commandments of Christ and our mind begins to concentrate from the confusion of its wandering in the sensible and imaginary world, then we will enter the depth of our soul. Then we will hear Christ's words to follow Him and become His disciples, that is, disciples of the Kingdom of God.

"Return to the depths" means to start thinking correctly according to the will of Christ, since we are Christians, to constantly have good thoughts, because from these good thoughts will come spiritual health, we will put off autonomy, hopelessness, despair, sadness.

Then, "return to the depths" means that we have to do a self-examination within ourselves to see in what state our soul is. Just as in order to find the cause of various diseases of the body we do all the necessary examinations, in the same way we must examine ourselves with self-knowledge, self-examination in the spirit of repentance.

Also, "return to the depths" means to find the place of the spiritual heart, where

God dwells. This is done by praying to God, with the Jesus Prayer, "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me" and with all the tradition that our Church has, which is characterized by a hesychastic, philokalic and neptic life.

Because people do not actively participate in this inner contest, that is why they suffer from pain, suffering, sadness, depression. And some of them end up in medicines, tranquilizers and drugs, and others end up in methods of Eastern philosophy and religion, which at their base are, as they have been characterized, "psycho-narcotics".

Unfortunately, we, the Orthodox Clergy, theologians and monastics, are also responsible for the fact that, while we have in our Church a rich neptic and hesychastic tradition which helps in this "returning to the depths", we neither know it nor teach it, so many Christians either remain in the external, hedonism, sensuality and with what this entails for spiritual, mental and physical health, or they seek this inner calm in alien traditions that involve them in other adventures. We must find a way to practice Christ's words: "Return to the depths", in order to find our lost self. *(trans. John Sanidopoulos)*

### **Let the Little Children Come to Me (Matt. 19:14)**

*[Editor's note: The following is adapted from a post on the "I am totally \*that\* mom" blog, and is a timely echo of Bishop Gregory's comments at our church consecration emphasizing the importance of having even our littlest ones in church during liturgy.]*

Dear parents with young children in church: you are doing something really, *really* important. I know it's not easy. I see you with your arms overflowing, and I know you came to church already tired. Parenting is tiring. Really tiring. I watch you bounce and sway trying to keep the baby quiet, juggling the infant car seat and the diaper bag as you find a seat. I see you wince as your child cries. I see you anxiously pull things out of your bag of tricks to try to quiet them.

When you are here, the church is filled with a joyful noise. When you are here, the Body of Christ is more fully present. When you are here, we are reminded that this worship thing we do isn't about bible study or personal, quiet contemplation but coming together to worship as a community where all are welcome, where we share in the Word and Sacrament together. When you are here, I have hope that their seats won't be empty in 10 years when your kids are old enough to *sit quietly and behave in worship*. I know that they are learning how and why we worship now, before it's too late. They are learning that worship is important.

I know how hard it is to do what you're doing, but I want you to know it *matters*. It matters to the congregation to know that families care about faith, to see young people... and even on those weeks when you can't see the little moments, it matters to your children. It matters that they learn that worship is what we do as a community of faith, that everyone is welcome.... I know it's hard, but thank you for what you do when you bring your children to church. Please know that your family -- with all of its noise, struggle, commotion, and joy -- are not simply tolerated, you are a vital part of the community gathered in worship.

## A Word From the Holy Fathers

Prooimion - "By Your Passion, our Savior, we are set free from passions." Adam cried out to You, and Hades was overwhelmed because of the Resurrection.

As the earth gladly accepts the rain from Heaven, just so, Adam who was held captive in Hades, awaited the Savior of the world and Giver of life, and said to Hades, "Why are you conceited? Wait for me; wait a short time, and you will soon see your power destroyed and mine exalted; now you hold in bondage me and my race. After a while you will see that I am freed from you, for Christ will come for me, and you will tremble; and He will bring to an end your tyranny through the Resurrection."

"No one has ever possessed such abundance of power of this sort; for I am king of all," said Hades to Adam. "For what other person will control me and rise superior to me? Who will take my kingdom from me? Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and Joseph, and all the prophets I hold in my power; and you I first possessed as chief of all of them. How, then, can you say that someone will come and trample on my? Would this person, then, be superior to all these others, so that He will deliver you, as you say, through the Resurrection?"

Adam heard Hades boasting in this way, and at once, the first created of mortals said to him, "hear my words, and do not in vain exalt yourself, for I whom you possess you cannot dominate; I was thrown out from the joy of Paradise because of you, treacherous one, and I was sent down to you a short time ago; you are my guard, but you do not have the power to destroy me – for I have a King who will wipe out your power. I serve under him...so that He may raise me up to Heaven through the Resurrection."

"No one is going to come forward to tear up your sentence; the One whom you call your ally, I rule over as king, for I shall seize Him as I do all men – for there is no one anywhere greater than I am. Do not, then, make a mistake, Adam; why do you struggle in vain? I hold you in the tomb, and I rule over your race. The One whom you think you have as protector you will now see crucified and swallowed down

by me. How, then, can you say that He will free you from me? I have been given orders to hold your race in my power because of the Resurrection.”

“Just as He will be made a second Adam, and my Savior because of me, He would not for my sake beg off from wounds. He will undergo my punishment for me, since he wears flesh like me. The will pierce the side of Him whom the Cherubim do not behold, and water will gush forth and quench my burning heat. You think that you will hold Him as a man; you will devour Him as a mortal, but you will disgorge Him as god after three days – for you will not be able to endure the torture which He will inflict on you through the Resurrection.”

Let us learn, then, my brothers, what the Lord does. For when He had tasted the vinegar and gall on the cross, He said, “This is the end of my sufferings,” and bowing His head, He gave up His spirit. The sun and moon and stars of heaven were not able to endure this gross insult and hid their brilliance. Little hills and mountains took thought of flight, and even the veil of the temple was torn in twain but the first-created man cried out from the abyss, “O my God, deliver me from Hades through the Resurrection.”

But Christ, Life, came to reveal death as sleep; Hades received Christ like each of the earth-born. He devoured the heavenly bread like bait; he was wounded by the hook of divinity. And Hades, lamenting, cried out, “I am pierced in the stomach; I do not digest the One whom I devoured. What I have devoured gave me strange eating! Not one of those whom I have eaten hitherto has troubled me. Perhaps He is the One whom Adam had announced to me saying, 'When He comes, He will chastise you through the Resurrection'.”

“Now you will recall my words, which I said to you a long time ago, 'My King is stronger than you.' – but you considered these words a dream. Experience will teach you His force for it is not only I, but all my descendants, and all men that you will lose. You will be deprived of all. The Christ whom you saw hanging on the cross, He will Himself enchain you, and joyfully I shall reply, “Where, O Death, is your victory, and where is your power? God has destroyed your strength through the Resurrection.”

“Just so, on the third day, the whale disgorged Jonah. Now I disgorge Christ and all of those who are Christ's; because of the race of Adam I am being chastised.” Uttering these laments, Hades cried out with groans, “I did not believe Adam when he told me these things in advance; but I boasted and loudly proclaimed, 'No one rules over me' – for formerly I was lord of all; but now I have lost all men, and taunting me, they say, 'Where O Death is your victory? Or where is your power? God has destroyed your strength through the Resurrection.’”

“In His coming, Christ has humbled your proud strength; in assuming my whole natural form, He has put you to flight. I am now bought by His precious blood; He who knows no corruption has freed me from corruption. Wherever you may turn, you see on all sides tombs which are emptied, and you, shameless one, naked. Where are your bolts and bars, strong one? My Jesus has come down and shivered to atoms all your possessions. Where, O Death, is your victory, or where is your power? God has destroyed your strength through the Resurrection.”

“He has lifted me to the Heavens; you He has put to flight; for the rest of time I share the throne. I am no longer subject to you. He took my body that He might make it new; He will make it immortal and cause it to share His throne. I shall reign with Him, for I have been resurrected with Him. No longer are you my master; but I rule over you. My pledge of surety is now on high, but you are trampled on below by those who cry, 'Where, O Death, is your victory, or where your strength? God has destroyed your strength through the Resurrection.'”

– St. Romanos the Melodist, *O.26, On the Resurrection*

### **Venerable Mother Paraskeva of Diveyevo**

She came from a peasant family of the Tambov province, and was called Irina. Her parents gave her in marriage and she lived for fifteen years with her husband, without bearing any children. Five years later her husband died, and Irina suffered much. While on a pilgrimage in Kiev, she came to abandon the world forever and decided to devote her life to God alone. In accordance with the providence of God, the landowners expelled her, and for five years she lived in her native village on the street, suffering privation. Finally, she was secretly tonsured with the name Paraskeva in Kiev.

She lived for thirty years in the woods of Sarov in a cave dug with her own hands, suffering various kinds of privations. Already at that time she began to be considered to be a blessed one and clairvoyant, and the people venerated her and asked for her prayers. At that time the Lord allowed her to endure the exploit of St. Seraphim of Sarov: she was cruelly beaten by robbers, almost to death.

For several more years Paraskeva saved herself in the woods of Sarov, but six years before the death of Pelagia Ivanovna, a holy fool venerated by Paraskeva, she began to live for long periods in Diveyevo, and after Pelagia's death she moved there completely. There she nursed and fussed over some children's dolls, which she called her children.

Her glance was exceptionally kind. She spent nights in prayer, and strictly watched that the sisters should daily go to the services in church, and get up at night to pray at midnight. The blessed one wove stockings while praying noetically. She also



took on the exploit of wandering, often going from one place to another, changing cells and distant obediences. She mowed the grass with a sickle while making prostrations and praying. Blessed Pasha made prophecies by means of the dolls, and, according to the witness of the "Chronicle", there were so many cases of her clairvoyance that it was impossible to collect and write them all down (p. 848). The spiritual world was opened to her, she saw the souls and knew the thoughts of those who came to her and surrounded her. She was often heard speaking with the saints and the Mother of God.

According to Diveyevo tradition, during the triumphant glorification of St. Seraphim in 1903, the Tsar and Tsaritsa visited blessed Pasha in her cell. It was her custom to put a lot of sugar in the tea of her visitors if something bad was going to happen to them. So much sugar was put in the Tsar's tea that it spilled over. She foretold them the birth of an heir, and also the fall of Russia and the Dynasty, the devastation of the Church and a sea of blood. After this his Majesty sought her counsel on all serious questions. Before her death, Blessed Praskeva made full prostrations before the portrait of his Majesty, foretelling his holiness. Saint Praskeva Ivanovna reposed On September 22nd in 1915 at the age of 120. Her relics rest in Diveyevo Monastery. (*adapted from johnsanidopoulos.com*)

## **Homily on Martyr Phobias the Gardener of Sinope**

by Asterius, bishop of Amasea

The commemoration of the saints is good and useful, especially for those who strive for what is noble. Those who long for virtue and true religion are not only taught by words but also have in front of them, as visible lessons, the deeds of people who lived in a just way. Therefore, Our Lord also, giving rules for the best of behavior, says: 'Anyone who does so and teaches in the same way will be called great' (Matt 5:19) and elsewhere: 'Let your lamp shine before people so that they see your good works and praise your Father who is in heaven' (Matt 5:16).

Theoretical education is a lesser and weaker teacher than real action; in the measure that sight is said to be more accurate than hearing, action can prevail over the word. In this manner we learn various bodies of knowledge. In art we are trained first by words, how to acquire, and then to master by the hand and by experience what remained dark.

A surveyor not otherwise studies first on the books and is full of his master's voice, but only catches the meaning of varying forms when he understands the points and lines and circles on his tablet. Or the one who wants to study astronomy is not only informed by word, but his teacher will show him also before his eyes the movement of the firmament by turning the axis of the globe. The doctor, even

laboring on Hippocrates and the other authorities, remains inexperienced until he has visited many sick and has learned from those who are ill how to heal them.

So we also as disciples of the martyrs take the deeds of these valiant people as teaching our confession and learn to preserve the true religion even in extreme danger; and therefore we keep our eyes on their holy shrines as inscribed monuments showing us precisely their struggle of martyrdom.

People who approach the oak of Mamre or the cave bought for the burial of Sarah from Ephrem the Chattean, where the patriarch himself rests with his children, renew after their observation of the places the representation with their mind and see the faithful patriarch with their spirit, the firstling of faith, his circumcision. And they consider also the offshoots of the same root, Isaac, Jacob and so with the recollection of these men they become spectators of the complete history of the patriarchs. In the same way do I approach today the venerable sepulchre of the thrice-blessed Phocas, and by the spot itself am I filled with the memory of all the stories about him. I see the gardener by occupation, the uneducated soul, the hospitable fellow, the jewel of this coastal region, the benefactor of the inner country, that most holy man, famous more than all those who are famous because of Christ.

The long list of noble martyrs is holy and venerable, those who gave thanks by their sufferings for the One who suffered, their blood serving as a recompense for the Blood of the Savior of us all. But among them, honor is not equal, they do not obtain their prizes according to the same measure. Even the enumeration of the Saints can't escape from a 'first' or a 'second'. The reason, I think, is the strict impartiality of their Judge.

Indeed, He considers the measures of the punishments and the steadfastness of their endurance, he makes the proof of the contest and gives recompense to the athletes according to their value. It is not strange that righteousness is evaluated like that by God, if we ourselves don't consider military leaders and presidents of games equally with the bravest fighters or the combatants, but they receive a reward according to the extent of their successes.

I made this digression to show that the one who is the occasion of our assembly today is excellent among his companions and fellow combatants. Those others are not all known by everybody nor is their courage generally spoken of, but nobody ignores Phocas. As the beams of the sun spread over everybody's eyes, so this martyr's fame reaches the ears of everyone. In one word, who knows Christ our Lord, knows his faithful servant. Therefore I refrain from praising what he has in common with all others, in order to develop special stories about him for you, lovers of the martyr.

Our holy man, that helper of Christians, was born in Sinope, not far from here, an ancient city of fame, abounding in valiant people and philosophers. There is no need to point to differences of religion; the question is whether this city was as a mother nursing excellent men. Phocas was a cultivator and gardener. On a piece of land he owned before the city-gate, on the isthmus, he exercised his job diligently, producing means of life for himself and for those who needed it.

He liked to open his small and humble house for guests, and as he lived near the main road, he could offer what he had to travelers, another Lot, not among the Sodomites but among the Sinopeans. In due times he did not fail to receive his reward, because his hospitality was the reason for his lifegiving death. You will hear about that as I go back a little bit in time.

When the message of our true religion was announced and the divine preaching was heard by everybody, making known Christ and His mysteries, according to the Psalm the nations were in turmoil and the kings and rulers came together, the erring people raged against Jesus' reign (cf. Ps 2:1–2), every Christian was sought as an evil-doer, those at hand were executed, those far away traced back. Phocas could not hide, though as gardener, his occupation was humble; but he was manifest as an initiate of Christ. And so there came up to him the people who should lead him away without trial or defense from this wretched, unstable life. The only charge made against this excellent man was that he confessed with a clear voice: even if not questioned, his deeds were manifest, but interrogated, he confessed with joy.

Those entrusted with the execution went out – at the same time being the reason for our celebration – and halted exactly at the dwelling of the one they sought, not knowing him, nor recognized by him. Meanwhile they held the reason for their presence secret, wanting first to be informed by those outside the city who Phocas was and where he lived, so they could appear at once and catch him as the Jews did with the Lord in the garden, with the help of Judas.

It escaped their notice that they already had the hunted in their nets, as the dogs the lamb, the wolves the sheep, the crooked robbers the dove, according to the prophet Isaiah, who says: 'The kid lies together with panthers, the lamb grazes together with the wolves, the lions share their food with the calf' (Isa 11:6). When, as usual, the talk at the table had brought them to confidence, the martyr questioned who they were and why they came to his city.

As they appreciated the fine hospitality of the man, they begged him urgently not to tell anybody what they were going to say, and they made known to him their secret goal by revealing their plan: to seek out Phocas for execution. And they

urged him for the sake of hospitality to do them the favor of helping with the hunt for their victim.

The servant of the Lord heard it and received the message with an unshaken mind. He had no low or unworthy feelings nor did he want to escape the danger because of cowardice. He had every opportunity to run away but instead he approved their demand. 'I shall lend you my help for your task', he said. 'I know the fellow, and am well able to discover him and make him known. It won't take long, just one day. Meanwhile, take your rest in my humble dwelling.'

After confirming his engagement in that way, he confined himself to a double task: to entertain his murderers and to prepare his own grave. When he had finished the trench and prepared his burial, he approached them the next day and said: 'I sought Phocas eagerly; now, the prey is ready, you can take it if you want'. They answered with considerable joy: 'Where is he?' And he said: 'Not far away, just near, it is me. So fulfill your command and accomplish the aim of your journey and the object of your trouble.'

The men were deeply struck on hearing these words, they stood as frozen, remembering the salt and the table, the generosity of their host in all his poverty. He however admonished them to undertake the execution, not to postpone even a little as the crime was not due to their hands, but the work of those who sent them. With his words he convinced them, and suffered; decapitated he was a holy offering to God.

A pillar and a support of the churches of God, so do we have him from that moment until now, gentlemen. Among the martyrs, he is most famous; he keeps the first place among the bravest and the best. One star is different from another in splendor according to common opinion and the word about the elect vessel. All over the world he is considered the most prominent among the saints.

He draws and brings everybody together to his dwelling. The thoroughfares from every country are full of people coming to this place of prayer. This splendid shrine is a place of relaxation for the afflicted, a resource for the needy, a surgery for the sick, an Egypt for the hungry. Phocas after his death nourishes more lavishly than Joseph did when alive; the latter indeed exchanged money for food, our man freely gratifies the poor. As when in wintertime the doves through need of food fly to the recently sown land and gather there, so the host of wandering poor assembles on the Isthmus of Sinope as at a common storehouse.

But elsewhere also our martyr has established through small relics some colonies of the metropolis, remarkable places to be sought by Christians; and this is also true for this holy place of assembly for those who celebrate. Precious for the Lord

is the death of His saints (Ps 115:6), and even when the relics are scattered all over, the fame of the thrice-blessed saint everywhere remains complete.

Even in the imperial city, the head of Italy, the empress of the world, he has a bodyguard and a renown and a magnificent house, beautifully decorated. The Romans serve Phocas no less than Peter and Paul. Therefore, as the story goes, they eagerly tried to obtain the head of our martyr, driven by a purpose contrary to that of Herodias. She, through thirst for blood, was claiming the head of the Just to injure it, but they wanted it to preserve it with honor, to their benefit.

The seamen and sailors everywhere, not only those who sail through the Black Sea but also those cutting through the Adriatic and the Aegean, or the Western ocean or the bays of the Eastern lands, have adapted the usual songs for the relief of their labor into a new eulogy of our noble man. The thrice-blessed saint is on their tongue as he shows evidence of his help in need.

Often he has been seen at night, when a storm was expected, awaking the helmsman who was dropping asleep over his rudder, at another moment stretching the ropes and taking care of the sail, looking forward from the prow to the shallow waters. It has become customary for sailors to have Phocas as a guest at table. And as it is impossible for someone incorporeal to share our life, hear how they contrived the impossible by pious consideration. Everyday they reserve at table an equal part of their food for the martyr. One of them buys it for money, the next day another, and so on. So the buying is allotted daily to someone for acquiring a part. When a harbor receives them and they go on land, the money is divided among the needy: that is the part of Phocas, to look after the poor.

The emperors are amazed about this most valiant and God-beloved man: they decorate God's temple with honoring treasures. Those who come after contend eagerly to exceed their elders. And there is no wonder that, if those who piously govern the Roman empire, people brought up in law and order, have such a devotion for the servant of Christ, his marvel is told also among the barbarians.

The most uncultivated Scyths who inhabit the other side of the Black Sea and dwell on the banks of the Maiotis and the Tanais river, also those who occupy the Bosphorus, stretching out until the Phasis river, all of them accompany as guards our gardener. Most different as they are from us as to customs and behavior; they agree with us on this single point, civilized by the Truth from their uncultivated ways. One of their leaders, a king, put down from his head his golden crown glittering with gems, together with his cuirass made of precious matter – the full armor of the barbarians is as a rule sumptuous and delicate – and sent them both as votive offerings, so that they, sanctified because of our martyr, became signs of his

power and status. It is evident that the crown was a thank-offering for his kingdom, the cuirass for his power over his enemies.

How could one enumerate the unceasing effects of the dream-visions and healings enjoyed by those who are ill, as it remains impossible to touch only with words all his achievements? At least we can say this much to those who adhere to the error of polytheism, that we have one servant of Christ, our co-servant who fulfills the operations of many so-called gods. Let the oracles be silent, as they were silenced by foretellings done among us by the Just. Let the places of healing be idle, Asclepius be no more venerated. Let people no more think about the Dioscuroi as saviors; sailors know too well who is their helper. Where is the Pythia, the pseudo-prophetess, who gives slanting and obscure answers to people so that she prepares an apology for her failures and lies in advance by using ambiguous words? Where is the source of the so-called prophetising water? Isn't this all nonsense and idle talk that, in the way of popular leaders, brings wretched people to error?

Adore God, Whose true servants receive such grace, who do nothing of their own power, but look after their co-servants in so far as they have been granted. This is what happened after their departure and their separation from the body. Recognize from the servants of the house the magnanimity of their Lord, glorify God who is truly above all, to whom adoration is due, now and always forever and ever. Amen. (*adapted from johnsanidopoulos.com*)

## **Also Commemorated Today**

Prophet Jonah (9th c. B.C.).

Venerable [Jonah](#) the Presbyter (9th c.), father of St. Theophanes the Hymnographer and St. Theodore Graptus.

New Martyr [Benjamin](#) bishop of Romanovsk (1930)(old cal).

Venerable [Jonah](#), abbot of Yash Lake (1589).

Venerable [Macarius](#), abbot of Zhabyn (1623).

Martyr [Phocas](#) the Gardener of Sinope (320).

St. [Peter](#) the Tax-collector of Constantinople (6th c.).

Hieromartyr Theodosius of Brazsk (1694) (Romania).

The 26 Martyrs of Zographou Monastery, Mt. Athos, martyred by the Latins (1284) (Greek) (martyred due to false charges of Latinism by the Emperor/Patriarch of CP per BHK) (Hegumen Thomas, the monks Barsanuphius, Cyril, Micah, Simon, Hilarion, James, Job, Cyprian, Sabbas, James, Martinian, Cosmas, Sergius, Menas, Joasaph, Joannicius, Paul, Anthony, Euthymius, Dometian, Parthenius and four laymen).

Martyrs Isaac and Martin.

Venerable Theophanes the Silent, recluse of the Kiev Caves.

Venerable Cosmas, desert-dweller and prophet of Zographou, Mt. Athos (1323)  
Hieromartyr Emmeram, bishop in Gaul, martyred at Regensburg (690) (Bavaria).  
St. Dinooth of Bangor Iscoed, Abbot (6th c.)  
Martyr [Maurice](#) and those with him (Candidus, Exuperius, Felix, Regula, Urs,  
Victor, and others) of the Theban Legion (N. Africa) (c. 300)

## Social Team for September 29

Team 9 – Carol Wright. Thank you!

### 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, Tina Crull, Marlene Doukas, Linda A. Georgiev, Sandi Hebel, Howl family, Helen P. Janowiak, John M. Janowiak, Johnson family, 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, 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.)