

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

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 ~

**December 8, 2024 – 24th Sunday After Pentecost (12th
Sunday of Luke) | Venerable Patapios of Thebes**

*You left this perishable earth on which you walked, Patapios; now you walk where
the feet of the meek walk. * On the eighth Patapios walked on green pastures.*

Saint Patapios was born in 380 in the Egyptian city of Thebes. His father was a governor of the region and a descendant of a well known Egyptian family. He and his wife were devout Christians and instructed Patapios in Holy Scripture. As Patapios reached a mature age, well-known tutors were brought from Alexandria to instruct him in science, mathematics, philosophy and rhetoric. Through this education, he became acutely aware of how transient this world is and was attracted to an ascetic way of life. He was particularly inspired by Clement, Origen and Athanasius. His father also took him to the renowned catechetical school in Alexandria where Patapios came under the influence of a blind teacher named Didymus. Didymus inspired him even further to desire the ascetic path he had chosen. When he finished his studies, he returned to Thebes to find out that his father had passed away. Desiring to live a life like the ascetics, he decided to leave for the Egyptian desert where he became well known for his ascetic deeds.

In the desert his struggles against the passions and to attain all the virtues led to his illumination, which drew numerous monks and people to seek his guidance. The more people came, the more he tried to conceal himself. Since light cannot be concealed in darkness, however, wherever he went he was discovered. No longer able to find peace in the desert he set off for Constantinople in 428. During his voyage, he met his disciple Sechnuti, who was an Egyptian rower. During this voyage, their ship passed near Corinth where they stayed for seven years in cave.

By 435, after seven years in Corinth, Patapios left his skete in the Geranian mountains to resume his journey to Constantinople taking with him the monk Sechnuti. In Constantinople, they secretly went to the Monastery of Blachernae, where he obtained a cell in the city wall. Patapios kept his identity a secret and resumed a life of strict fasting, vigil and prayer under the guise of a simple monk.

Here he performed many miracles of healing. A child, blind from birth, was led by God's providence to Saint Patapios. He besought the Saint to pray to God that he be given his sight and be able to look upon God's creation - thus allowing him to praise God all the more. Patapios having compassion on the suffering child, prayed to God, and the child's sight was restored. This miracle revealed God's chosen one throughout the entire city, and people rushed to him for healing, comfort and instruction.

Patapios healed an eminent man of dropsy by tracing the sign of the Cross over him and anointing him with oil. By making the sign of the Cross in the air with his hand, he freed a youth from an unclean spirit that had cruelly tormented him. The evil spirit, with a loud shriek, came out from God's creature like smoke. He made the sign of the Cross over a woman who had a sore on her breast all filled with worms, and made her healthy. Many other miracles did Saint Patapios perform, all through prayer in the name of Christ and by the sign of the Cross.

After a life adorned with virtue and miracles, he died at the great age of eighty-three in 463 and was buried by his disciples in the Church of Saint John the Forerunner in Constantinople.

One thousand years after the repose of the Saint, when the Turks captured Constantinople in 1453, his relics were removed and taken to the little cave in Corinth (as he had requested during his lifetime). The Saint's body was hidden behind a western wall in the cave facing the iconostasis and chapel they built. The memory of the Saint's whereabouts soon disappeared.

In 1904 a local priest, Father Constantine Sosanis, was serving the chapel in this cave. He was an unnaturally tall priest who regularly served this small chapel and because of his height commissioned some changes to the chapel. The night before the works to the western wall were to commence, Fr. Constantine had a dream in

which a monk warned him to "take care when you break the wall because I am on the other side. I am Saint Patapios of Egypt." He was found the next day under tiles holding a large wooden cross on his chest, a parchment scroll with his name, Roman coins, and large leaves covering his relics as fresh as they had been picked that very moment. A sweet odor also exuded from his relics.

The holy relic is now in a special wooden structure at the back of the cave. Inside the cave there are also Roman wall paintings from the 13th century, with three prominent figures of St. Patapios, St. Ipomoni and St. Nikon. The monastery church is dedicated to the Virgin Mary and contains at its center the Mother of God for veneration. The church also holds the relic skull of St. Ipomoni (Empress Helen Dragash) and part of the hip bone of St. Nikon.

In 1952 a Greek priest, Father Nektarios Marmarinos, built the all-female monastery on this site. The local people initially resisted this idea since the location of the monastery is very difficult to reach even to this day. After the founding of the monastery, Sister Patapia was nominated as Abbess, with Father Nektarios Marmarinos as its spiritual leader. Today, there are some forty nuns living in the cells of the foundation and the current Abbess is Mother Isidora.

Since Saint Patapios' relics have been discovered, many people have been visited by the Saint in visions and dreams asking them to visit "his house in Loutraki." He is especially known for healing cancer, and miracles occur throughout the world, including as far off as Australia and America.

Miracle - The Conversion of a Catholic

It was Pascha of 1986 on Mount Athos when Elder Martinianos of St. Panteleimon Skete in Kapsala, of the Holy Monastery Pantocratoros, related the following miracle of St. Patapios.

The Elder had a relative in West Germany named George. While in Germany, George married a German woman who was Catholic and had not been baptized Orthodox. They had married Orthodox, their two children received Orthodox baptism, but the wife continued to remain Catholic despite worshiping in Orthodox churches.

They returned to Greece to New Smyrna, their local parish being St. Sosti. In 1985 they decided to spend the summer in Loutraki of Corinth. One day they went up to the Monastery of Saint Patapios and venerated his holy relics. The husband entered first and venerated first. The wife was right behind him and, though Catholic, she also was going to venerate the relics, when suddenly she fainted and fell to the floor. The husband immediately took her into his arms and with the help of other pilgrims brought her outside for some fresh air. Having recovered, they asked her why she fainted. She answered, astonished: "What, you didn't see, you didn't hear?"

The Saint pushed me and said: 'How can you, a heretic, approach me?'" At that moment she asked that she be baptized Orthodox. After a few catechetical lessons at her parish, she was baptized Orthodox.

Today she continues to make her pilgrimage to the Holy Monastery of Saint Patapios, with great faith and reverence. And since her baptism, she has said that she feels like an entirely different person. In one telephone conversation, spoken of in the book by Monk Nikodemos Bilali who compiled the life and services of the Saint, she says:

"When I pray, I feel like God is mine, my Father, though before I felt nothing. Now I light my candle at the Iconostasi, I prepare prosphora, I Commune, I read lives of Saints, and my soul feels God near me. How can I explain this to you? It is something very different from before, a certainty that I am near God. And I ascribe this to Saint Patapios, whom I thank."

Visions of Saint Patapios

1. Saint Patapios had appeared in a vision to Fr. Nektarios, the founder of the Holy Monastery of Saint Patapios, while a student in Corinth. He began the architectural design of the Monastery in 1947.

During this time Metropolitan Prokopios of Corinth got sick and went to the hospital. Fr. Nektarios visited him on January 23, 1951 to pray over him. Once the Metropolitan saw him, he became very moved and said: "Saint Patapios told me in my sleep that he wants his Monastery to happen! We cannot do otherwise!" Then he gave the following commands:

- a. For the chancellor of the Metropolis, Metropolitan Gabriel Kalokairinos, to get the keys to the cave which the priests of Loutraki had and give them to Fr. Nektarios.
- b. For no priest to serve there without permission from the Metropolis.
- c. For the Monastery to be recognized quickly after he proposed this to the Holy Synod.
- d. To help financially to make sure this happens and for nuns to occupy the Monastery by August 1952.

Metropolitan Prokopios is considered the great founder of the Monastery. He fell asleep in the Lord on December 3, 1964 and is forever commemorated there with a plaque at the entrance. Upon his death he donated his entire vast library of books as well as other possessions from the Metropolis. May his memory be eternal!

2. The Monastery one day ran out of oil. Saint Patapios appeared to a gentleman in Koropi, Attica. He asked him for a barrel of oil. "Where do you want me to bring it

old man?" The elder gave him the address to the Monastery and disappeared. The gentleman filled a barrel of oil and brought it to Loutraki. As difficult as it is to walk up to the Monastery, he did this carrying the barrel and brought it to the door.

3. The cave where the relics are is very cold and damp, and in the winter is frigid. Some prayed to the Saint: "Even the poorest houses have rags to use as rugs. Your little cave here has nothing, and we along with you are freezing. Do something to find something." That night Saint Patapios appeared to a woman in Corinth and gave her directions on the rug he wanted for his house in the cave. He wanted it to be black and red and gave the exact size he wanted, then asked her to bring it to the Monastery. The woman made it, brought it, laid it down in the cave, and it matched perfectly. (*adapted from johnsanidopoulos.com*)

Today's Epistle Lesson – St. Paul's Letter to the Ephesians 2:14-22 EOB

Brethren, Jesus is our peace, he who made both [groups to be] one and tore down the wall of separation. He abolished in his flesh the enmity which is the law of commandments with its decrees, so that he might create in himself one new humanity instead of two, making peace. He reconciled both [groups] to God in one body, through the cross, by which he destroyed that enmity. He came and preached peace to you who were far off and also to those who were near. Through him, we both have access to the Father in one Spirit. And so, you are no longer strangers and foreigners! Instead, you are fellow-citizens with the saints, and members of God's household, being built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets. Christ Jesus himself is the chief cornerstone; in whom the whole building, fitted together, grows into a holy sanctuary in the Lord. In Christ, you too are built up into a dwelling-place of God in [the] Spirit.

Today's Gospel Lesson – Saint Luke 17:11-19 EOB

At that time, as Jesus was on his way to Jerusalem, it happened that he was passing between [the borders of] Samaria and Galilee. As he entered into a certain village, ten men who were lepers met him, and they stood at a distance. They lifted up their voices, saying, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!" When Jesus saw them, he told them, "Go and show yourselves to the priests." And it happened that as they went, they were cleansed. One of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, glorifying God with a loud voice. He fell on his face at Jesus' feet, giving him thanks; and this man was a Samaritan. Jesus said, "Were not ten cleansed? But where are the nine [others]? Was no one found who came back to glorify God, except for this foreigner?" Then Jesus said to him, "Get up and go your way. Your faith has healed you!"

Homily on the Gospel for the Twelfth Sunday of Luke

By St. Luke, Metropolitan of Simferopol

Our Lord Jesus Christ, as you have now heard, having healed ten lepers, commanded them to go and show themselves to the priests, as the law of Moses prescribed. They went and on the way they were all cleansed, all were healed, but only one of them returned to the Lord Jesus Christ and fell at His feet, thanking Him for the healing. And it was a Samaritan. The Lord said with surprise: "Were not ten cleansed? Where are the nine? How did they not return to give glory to God, except for this foreigner?" (Luke 17:17-18). And turning to the healed Samaritan, He said to him: "Go, your faith has saved you."

As you can see, the Lord Jesus Christ placed this foreigner, this Samaritan, above those Jews who were cleansed along with him. You also know the Parable of the Merciful Samaritan, you know how a certain man, walking along a dangerous path from Jerusalem to Jericho, where there were many robbers, was wounded by them, robbed and left bleeding. Two Jews passed by, first a priest, and after him a Levite, approached, looked at the unfortunate wounded man - and went on without helping him in any way. A Samaritan was walking along that road, and seeing the unfortunate man, he poured wine and oil on his wounds, bandaged his wounds and put him on his donkey, and took him to an inn, and there he gave him over to the care of the innkeeper.

Again you see that the Lord in this parable also placed the Samaritan, a foreigner, much higher in moral dignity than the Jewish priest and Levite. And what does this mean, when the Lord Jesus Christ sent his apostles to preach, He said to them: "Do not go on the path of the pagans and do not enter the city of the Samaritans, but go first to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." As if it were a contradiction: on the one hand, he puts the merciful Samaritan and the grateful Samaritan healed of leprosy higher than the Jews, higher than the people of Israel, and at the same time forbids His apostles to enter the Samaritan cities. What does it mean?

This is what I want to explain to you. At the same time, I want to remind you that the events confirmed what the Lord Jesus Christ commanded to His disciples, confirming that the apostles did not need to enter the Samaritan city. One day the Lord Jesus was walking with His disciples from Galilee to Jerusalem, and halfway through he wanted to rest in a village in Samaria. He sent two disciples ahead to announce that the Lord was coming and wanted to rest with them, but the Samaritans did not receive Him, because He looked like He was traveling to Jerusalem. Why not accepted? Because the Jews and the Samaritans were in constant alienation from each other.

The Samaritans did not come from the people of Israel at all, they were settlers from Assyro-Babylonia, sent by King Sennacherib here to replace the Israelites who were taken captive. They settled here, but they were pagans. And then a great misfortune happened to them: a large flock of lions appeared in their land, which tormented and killed both their cattle and themselves. They informed King Sennacherib about this disaster. They called the Israelite priests and asked them why. They answered: because the settlers do not honor the true God, Jehovah, whom we honor. If you want the lions to leave them alone, let them send priests to them and teach them the law of Israel. Sennacherib did just that: he sent priests, they taught the people the law of Moses, and the Samaritans accepted this law, but they did not accept all the sacred books of the Old Testament, but only the Pentateuch of Moses. That's precisely because they did not fully accept the law with all the books of the Old Testament, and the Israelites were alienated from them, and they themselves were alienated from them. That is why the Lord Jesus Christ, sending His disciples to preach, said that they should not go to the cities of Samara, but would go "to the lost sheep of the house of Israel."

But don't we read in the fourth chapter of the Gospel of John about the great conversation of the Lord Jesus Christ with the Samaritan woman? He walked from Jerusalem to Galilee, sat down to rest at the well of Jacob, which was deeply revered by the Samaritans, and which was located not far from the main city of Samaria – Shechem. A Samaritan woman came to draw water, and the Lord Jesus Christ talked with her for a long time. It was an unusually deep conversation: He revealed to her the greatest truths of the faith and at the same time showed omniscience, which is unusual for a person, for He told everything that had happened in her life. At the end of the conversation, the Lord Jesus Christ, when the Samaritan woman said to Him: "I know that the Messiah, that is, Christ, will come; when He comes, He will announce everything to us," and He answered her, "It is I who speak to you."

It was the first time that the Lord Jesus revealed Himself so directly, revealed Himself as Christ, as the Messiah. He forbade this earlier to His disciples, He also forbade the demons, who shouted, being cast out from the unfortunate possessed by them: "We know You, who You are, the Holy One of God. " He forbade them to divulge that He was the Christ. He did not tell anyone about this among the Jewish people, but here He directly says to a Samaritan woman: "It is I who am talking to you." And look what happened next. The woman, amazed at her conversation with the Lord, left her waterpot and ran to Shechem and said to the inhabitants: "Go, see the Man Who told me all that I have done. Isn't He the Christ?"

And the inhabitants of the city of Shechem came in multitudes to see the Lord Jesus. The Gospel does not say what the Lord talked to them about, but in any case we know that he did not work a single miracle before them. And it was enough for the Samaritans to have one conversation with the Lord, one sight of Him, for them to believe in Him as in the Messiah. They believed and asked Him to come to their city, and He stayed there for two days.

He Himself did what He previously forbade His disciples. "... do not enter the city of Samaria." And now He Himself entered, and led them after Himself. The Lord Jesus Christ knew the hearts of people. He knew that the Samaritans, not even seeing His miracles, as the inhabitants of Bethsaida, Chorazin, and Capernaum saw them in multitudes, would believe in Him. He knew what charm His Divine Personality, His words, unheard of by the world, produces on good people.

Let us remember how one day the chief priests and scribes sent their servants to bring Jesus to them, who was preaching in the temple. The servants returned with nothing, and when asked why they didn't bring Jesus, they answered: "No man ever spoke like this man" (John 7:46).

The Lord Jesus Christ knew that one should not send disciples to the Samaritans ahead of time, that they would not be accepted. He knew that it was necessary to wait for the time, that it was necessary to come to the Samaritans Himself, that they would see and hear Him. He knew their hearts, knew that their hearts were better and purer than the hearts of many of the people of Israel, like the heart of a Samaritan grateful to Him for healing, like the heart of a merciful Samaritan. He knew their hearts, the Lord knew that they would believe much more easily than the people of Israel. Therefore, it was not necessary for the disciples to go to the Samaritans before Himself: He wanted to show the greatness of His work, the unspeakable height of His speeches in a personal conversation with the Samaritans. And this time, subdued by His words, they believed immediately, believed much more easily and in greater numbers than the Jews.

Well, what conclusion can we draw from this event for ourselves? Remember the words of Christ addressed to His disciples: "Go and teach all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit." And His disciples, as you know, after the ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ into heaven, fulfilled His word, fulfilled His command: they carried to all nations, to the pagan nations they carried the preaching of the gospel of Christ. In the Apostle Luke we read slightly different words of Christ, addressed to the apostles before His ascension: "Go into the whole world, preach the gospel to all creation" - not only to all nations, not only to pagans, but even to all creation.

There was a saint who understood and literally fulfilled this command of Christ - that was Francis of Assisi. He preached the gospel of Christ not only to people, but to all creation: birds flew to him, perched on trees, and for a long, long time he preached to them about the Lord Jesus Christ.

Well, after what you have just heard about the attitude of the Lord Jesus towards the Samaritans, shall we dare treat those who are not yet Christians differently than He? Shall we really dare to forget the words of Holy Scripture that "in every nation he who does righteousness is pleasing to Him." If the Lord is pleased, will they not be pleasing to us?!

Shall we dare treat those who do not yet know the Lord Jesus Christ differently? Are we really going to exalt ourselves with our Christianity over those who have not yet known Christ, but perhaps in the future they will. Will we forget the words of John the Baptist, addressed to the Jews, who were proud of their descent from Abraham: "Do not think to say to yourselves: 'We have Abraham as our father,' for I tell you that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones" (Matt. 3:9).

I lived for many years in Central Asia and knew the Muslims intimately. I know that many of them are extremely pious: they pray five times a day, and, moreover, they do not pray at home, but go to the mosque five times a day. I saw a young Muslim sitting next to me in prison, who prayed for hours, prayed even longer than I did. I saw and knew deeply pious Jews who honor God. Well, shall we really dare to exalt ourselves above them, shall we really forget that in every nation those who fear God, do righteousness, do goodness, are pleasing to Him? And they will please me, and you must be pleased, if Christ is pleased.

But does it follow from this that we should treat them as brothers in our faith in Christ? No, in no way: we must treat them with love and respect, but also remember the word that the Lord said before His ascension: "... whoever has faith and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not have faith will be condemned."

This must be remembered, and remember the great tenth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, which tells how God Himself, through His angel, commanded the Apostle Peter to go to a distant city to the pagan centurion Cornelius, who was pleasing to God, because he did the truth, did works of mercy and deeply honored God, but was a pagan and did not know Christ. The Lord commanded Peter to go and teach him the law of Christ, for this was exactly what the centurion Cornelius lacked, for with all his piety he could not be saved without being baptized in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Peter went according to the command of the Lord and taught them all the teachings of Christ and baptized them all.

So it would be necessary that all good and pious people who do not lead to Christ - from Muslims, from Jews and from Buddhists - to turn to Christ. And if it happened, they would be the dearest brothers for us, but now only people worthy of respect who should be treated with love, and not exalted before them. I will tell you the words of Paul, which you need to firmly remember: "According to the grace given to me, I say to each of you: do not think more about yourself than you should think, but think modestly, according to the measure of faith that God has given to each" (Romans 12:3).

Remember this, and I will end my speech with this. I say: do not be arrogant, do not think of yourself more than how much you need to think, than to think correctly. Think that although you are Christians, you are still bad Christians, constantly offending Christ with your sins, breaking the commandments of Christ. Consider yourself worse than everyone, below everyone. Do not exalt yourself over those who, although they do not know Christ, are pleasing to God. Amen. (*trans. John Sanidopoulos*)

A Word From the Holy Fathers

Prooimion – You once cleansed the leper of his disease, Almighty Lord. Have mercy and cure our spiritual suffering, through the prayers of God's Mother, Physician of our souls, the Lover of mankind, Savior and only Sinless One.

Let us sing a hymn to the God and Benefactor of all humans, to Christ our Redeemer. He brings delight to our souls and is the root of all good, because he is the joy and the salvation of every mortal, the dependable Physician, kind and full of mercy. As God he manages the universe with ineffable wisdom and cures our souls' sufferings with his divine will. As the only undivided Master, he guides the world; he has and supplies grace and glory to all – as well as forgiveness of sins – the Lover of mankind, Savior and only Sinless One.

The Master and Source of all time came into the world during time; wishing to save us, the Creator appeared among his works. He who shaped Adam's form inexplicably became Adam, a mystery beyond understanding and reason. Without changing, the Word became flesh and remained the Word, just as he was, undivided from the Father. The Father of all eternity dwelt in our midst – another mystery: he was not ashamed of our fallen nature, the Lover of mankind, Savior and only Sinless One.

As a good Physician who observes everything and rushes to offer mercy, he cures our mortal nature, wretched and gripped by every disease. Those in agony he treats; the doomed he rescues; those deep in disease the wise Physician saves. As God he has the power to expel every demon from humans, to make the blind see,

the paralyzed man again. He cleanses leprosy with nothing more than his divine will, because he is the creator of all things, visible and invisible, the Lover of mankind, Savior and only Sinless One.

Let us eagerly learn what Christ says to the leper who approached him – how the sick man showed his disease to the All-wise Physician. The episode is clearly narrated in the inspired gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke. In a great crowd, an immense mass of people rushing toward Christ, the leper appeared, not ashamed to display the pollution of his disease to all. And so, in front of all, he falls on the ground and cries: “Redeemer of all mortals, save me, the Lover of mankind, Savior and only Sinless One.”

This affliction is despised, disgusting to all mankind. Thus those suffering from the racking disease strive to hide it. It is more hideous to look at than any other infection: it feeds on human flesh as if it were fodder. It spreads to all the limbs, as if eager to display its victim as a total abomination. This polluted disease generates the buboes before which medical science is totally helpless. But Christ drives it away, the Lover of mankind, Savior and only Sinless One.

Under siege by the disease, the leper wept and moaned. As he saw his pains growing every hour, he decided to speak. His words may have been such: “My flesh – O God – has been dipped in a terrible dye by a completely unnatural infection. Like a noxious vine it creeps over my entire body. It harrows my skin; I have become a hideous sight, a suppurating clot of charred flesh – horrible to see. I have absolutely no hope of recovery, unless he gives it, the Lover of mankind, Savior and only Sinless One.”

“Now hurry, my soul, to Christ the Virgin's son, to find a cure which you cannot get from any human. Christ gave the sight that nature had stolen from the man who came from his mother's womb in a cloud of shadow. He snatched the widow's son from the claws of death, and restored control to a man paralyzed for years. Nothing can resist his attack, since he is God and Creator. And so, even I believe that he is not merely the offspring of a human being, the Lover of mankind, Savior and only Sinless One.”

“A human doctor does not have the power to restore what nature herself omitted, the way Christ made whole the man blind from the womb. From this day it is clear that he is the Creator of the first man, whom he molded from clay. He used clay to give sight to the blind man I just mentioned; he is the Creator and Master of nature, Eternal God. The might of my flesh is in revolt against nature. But he was by choice supernaturally born from the womb of a virgin, the Lover of mankind, Savior and only Sinless One.”

“Bolstered by faith, the bleeding woman was cured when she touched the hem of his cloak. I too want to appeal to the timeless, All-good Master.” After the leper said this, he came forth with a plea; he bent his knee to the ground and beseeched Christ. He framed the gist of his prayer in three words: “If you wish, you can completely cure me, Lord.” the Compassionate One looks for faith, not a flood of words. He knows everyone's thoughts, the Guide and the Creator of all humans, the Lover of mankind, Savior and only Sinless One.

Whenever someone is trapped by events, at a loss for help and words, and unable to compose an appeal to reach a king, he immediately goes to wise men able to compress a request into a few words, nothing verbose. So these very skilled and experienced men arrange the untrained cascade of thought in concise form; they then write out these precise phrases on a single sheet. The King receives the leper's appeal and grasps the point of the words – the Lover of mankind, Savior and only Sinless One.

The untutored leper spoke with faith: “I shall compose an appeal to the All-wise Lord; in my eagerness I have run to hallowed and wise Faith. I have begged Faith for help and she has briefly addressed, on my behalf, an appeal to Jesus, the King. Like a very wise writer, Faith has compressed all the meaning of my request into three words. My petition is written on the parchment of my soul and I carry it to you: 'If you wish, pity me!' Do not delay, Benefactor of all, the Lover of mankind, Savior and only Sinless One.”

“How can you not wish to cleanse some one as filthy as I am? This is my prime concern: 'If you wish, you can.' I know your power, Lord. No one defies you; but I fear that you might have another priority. Lord of Pity, just nod; the leprosy will flee. Just show your wish and all my suffering is gone. True, you have miraculously become a man by the virgin Mary – but before all the ages you are the Word of God, God and the Creator of the Universe, the Lover of mankind, Savior and only Sinless One.”

Christ replied to the leper: “I shall save you from your pain, because you are so trusting. The appeal that you sent has touched me; my decision immediately responds to its force. You said, 'If you wish, you have the power, Lord.' I do have the power and I do wish to save you. This is my authoritative decree: 'I wish him cleansed!' I wish this as the Lord of Pity; I decree it as the Lord of Power. My power and my will work as one, since I am Commander and Creator, the Lover of mankind, Savior and only Sinless One.”

The only Lord of Pity stretched forth his hand and touched the man. The leper's body was immediately purified. The disease was banished and fled as fast as it could. His skin was restored to its natural beauty. All of those nearby were

thunderstruck when the leper cried out: “You are Good, the only Almighty One. You have come into the world to reprove an errant world. These are not the works of a mortal man. You are the God of the Universe, the Lover of mankind, Savior and only Sinless One.”

When the Lord of Pity heard these words, he gave the leper these first-priority instructions: “Go on, obey the Law. Hurry to show yourself to the priest. Offer him the gift which my son Moses ordered those of his people who were cured of leprosy to offer. The Jews indict me as an opponent of the Law; they call me an implacable enemy of Moses. Be my witness in this matter. Show that I fulfill all the Law. My physician's fee will be your testimony that I am a guardian of the Law, the Lover of mankind, Savior and only Sinless One.”

At the Lord's command, the leprosy and its pains were mortified and fled. The disease saw the Creator and Redeemer and was terrified. Yet the Arian heretics do not tremble in this way before the mastery and authority of the Word, the Son of God. He is the one who was eternally generated, before the ages, from a timeless Father, a timeless Son himself. He will endure for all eternity just as he existed before all time. He willingly was born in the flesh from a virgin, but he never left his Father, the Lover of mankind, Savior and only Sinless One.

We who love the holy teachings of Christ, our God and Creator, all believe in and worship a single true Godhead, in three persons, each the same, all eternal. In this faith we reject the errors of the godless heretics. Against the Jews we affirm three separate substances, but only one nature, against the plagues of polytheists. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit have one nature. One member of this Blessed Trinity willingly chose to become flesh by the Virgin, the Lover of mankind, Savior and only Sinless One.

Son of God, King before all ages and for all eternity, just as you pitied the leper, so too drive away our suffering with your mighty word. Save us who come to your font of goodness. Grant us forgiveness of our trespasses. As the Creator of the Universe, you alone have the power to remit sins. We beg you to give us redemption, by means of the prayers of the Virgin Mary, the Mother of God, through whom we all approach you and call out: “Have mercy on us, for you are the Lover of mankind, Savior and only Sinless One.”

– St. Romanos the Melodist, *Kontakion O.8 On the Cleansing of the Leper*

Holy Martyr Anthusa of Rome

The Holy Martyr Anthusa, the wife of a Roman official, was baptized by Saint Ambrose of Milan (December 7). When the city prefect's wife Sunilda suggested that Saint Anthusa be baptized by an Arian, she refused. So she was committed to the fire, and received the crown of martyrdom. (*from oca.org*)

Also Commemorated Today

New Hieromartyr [Sergius](#) (Orlov) (1937).
New Hieromartyr [Alexander](#) ([Dubinin](#)) of Panino (1937)
Venerable [Cyril](#), abbot of Chelma Hill (Kholm, Kholmogory) (1367).
Holy Apostles of the Seventy: [Sosthenes](#), [Apollos](#), [Cephas](#), [Tychicus](#),
[Epaphroditus](#), [Caesar](#), and [Onesiphorus](#).
Holy [Martyrs](#) of North Africa (62 clergy and 300 laymen) (late 5th c.)
St. [Sophronius](#), archbishop of Cyprus (8th c.).
St. [Parthenios](#) of Chios (1883)
St. [Budoc](#), bishop of Dol (6th c.)
St. [Eucharius](#), bishop of Trier (3rd c.)
St. [Eutychian](#), pope of Rome (283)
St. [Gunthild](#) of Wimborne (748)
St. [Romaric](#), abbot of Remiremont (653)(France)

Social Team for December 15

Team 6 is up next week – Gabriela Howl, Elijah Blair, Shannon Johnson, Jameson Barker. 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.)