

SOBORNOST

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*ECUMENICAL PATRIARCHATE
OF CONSTANTINOPLE*

SERVICES

*See Holy Week schedule at
the end of the bulletin*



April 13, 2025 – Palm Sunday

What Kind of Triumph Do We Seek?

We celebrate today the Great Feast of the Triumphal Entry of the Lord into Jerusalem. Today Christ enters openly and boldly into the holy city, no longer in secret, no longer hiding Himself to forestall the fury of the Jews, for He knows that His hour to be glorified is now at hand. And so on this day He makes his entry into Jerusalem with glory — at least, in a certain sense with glory.

At this time, the people of Israel were suffering bitterly under Roman occupation. The people of God had once again been subjugated by pagan overlords, and so — just as for their ancestors in Egypt — the promise of God to deliver them from their bondage was something for which they yearned with their whole hearts, with an existential intensity of which we comfortable and well-fed Americans can probably scarcely conceive. And so perhaps we likewise cannot truly fathom the ardent desire and euphoric joy with which they gather around Christ today, crying out: “Hosannah!” which simply means “Save us now!”

The manner in which they received Christ into their city boldly proclaimed their belief that the Lord would lead them to victory over the Roman occupation. When Roman generals had won an exceptionally great victory they were afterward received into Rome by such a triumphal procession, arrayed in vesture symbolizing

their nearness to both kingship and divinity. Likewise, the people of Israel cried out not only “Hosannah!” but also “Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord! The King of Israel!” And the palm branches with which they went out to meet Christ were the quintessential symbol of victory among the Romans — especially military victory — and in Latin the word *palma* was often even used in place of the words *victoria* or *triumphalis*.

One can therefore understand the consternation of the Jewish rulers, who just prior to this were already in a frenzy of fear that “If we let Him thus alone, all men will believe on Him: and the Romans shall come and take away both our place and nation” (John 11:48). And so some of the Pharisees, beholding the hope of all Israel, yet — blinded by their passions — seeing it rather as the fulfillment of their greatest fears, urged the Lord to forbid His followers from such bold and inflammatory speech. Jesus, however, “answered and said unto them, I tell you that, if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out” (Luke 19:40).

So indeed it was necessary and right for the crowds to cry out as they did. Yet alas for those among the crowds who did so with their hearts still like those very stones, lacking understanding! And even the disciples themselves “did not understand these things at first” (John 12:16). For the people of Israel were expecting a Messiah who would lead them to earthly freedom, like Moses of old, to “restore again the kingdom to Israel” (Acts 1:6). They did not yet realize that the Lord had come to give them heavenly freedom, to restore them again to the Kingdom of God. They expected that He would lead them to victory over Caesar their oppressor, and had as yet no inkling of His true purpose: to lead them to victory over Death itself, which for so many countless lifetimes had held the entire human race subject to bondage (cf. Hebrews 2:15).

So firmly did the people of Israel believe in their own vision of the coming Messiah that absolutely nothing Christ said or did could convince them otherwise. For He did not make His triumphal entry into the holy city in the manner of the great leaders of men, in a splendid chariot drawn by four magnificent horses; no, He came sitting on the foal of a donkey, the lowest and humblest of creatures. He did not come arrayed in vesture proclaiming His kingship and divinity, but rather clothed in the clay of our human nature, arrayed in the vesture of poverty, and scorned by the learned and mighty men of this world. Again and again He had spoken to them of the coming hour in which He would be betrayed by His closest friends, disowned by His own chosen people, and given over to death at the hands of the very state whom the Israelites so certainly expected Him to overthrow.

And after this He had spoken to them something yet more astonishing, more astonishing than anything that had been heard in all the history of mankind: that after all these things, He Himself would rise from the dead. And the victory which

His triumphal entry today celebrates was not a military victory, not a political victory, not any success of insurrection against the oppressive yoke of the hated Empire. The victory triumphantly celebrated today was the resurrection of Lazarus the Four Days Dead, the prefiguration of Christ's own resurrection and the resurrection of all mankind on the Last Day.

Yet the people did not understand these things. And because they did not understand, because they still clung to their own conceptions and expectations, the same crowds who today shout "Hosannah in the highest!" will, only a few short days later, cry out instead: "Crucify Him! Crucify Him!"

But, brothers and sisters, what right do we have to judge and condemn them for this? Because do we ourselves not often cling to our own conceptions and expectations about God, and about what kind of victories we think He ought to achieve in our lives? Do we ourselves not often desire an earthly kingdom of righteousness? Do we ourselves not often hope for the Lord to defeat those whom we consider to be the enemies of godliness in this life? Do we ourselves not often long for deliverance from all manner of temporal difficulties and afflictions, and hope for mighty acts of divine power to solve the many and various problems which plague our lives in this world?

It is not that these desires are wholly wrong. But they are, at the very least, totally secondary, and not in any way necessary for "the one thing needful," for the salvation of our souls. And so each of us must ask ourselves: do these desires and expectations not so often distract us from seeking the Kingdom of Heaven above all that is merely earthly, and from striving to defeat the many passions and sins which hide and make their lairs in our own hearts? Do they not so often distract us from the truth that the chief of all sinners and the greatest opponent of my salvation is none other than I myself? Do they not so often distract us from Christ? Do they not so often distract us from the Cross?

We must take great care, my brothers and sisters, about what kind of conceptions and expectations we have of God, lest, when we see the Cross looming before us in our own lives, we rebel against it, or shrink from it, or resent it, or despair of it, and — having been deceived by our own expectations — we once again betray Him Who was crucified upon it for our sakes.

And if we do so, we will also have betrayed ourselves by our own paltriness of vision and smallness of heart. If indeed Christ had come instead to overthrow Caesar and to free the Jewish people from Roman bondage, who today would know or care at all? The whole story would be relegated to an obscure chapter of ancient history, forgotten by all but a few pedantic scholars. But today, the very symbol of Christ's purported defeat at the hands of Pontius Pilate and the Jewish

rulers is emblazoned throughout every corner of the world, symbolizing nothing less than the defeat of death itself, the advent of life eternal, the forgiveness of every sin and every transgression, the deification of human nature, the union of mankind with God Himself throughout all time and all eternity, and the renewal of all the world in the Kingdom of Heaven.

So let us be of good courage, and let us celebrate triumphantly today not only the victories, but also every such “defeat” which the loving Providence of God allows to come to pass in our own lives as well, knowing that these too will be turned also by the omnipotent might of God into our own victory, our own eternal life, the forgiveness of our own sins, and our own deification and union with God.

“Why?” we might ask. Why must the unspeakable horrors and tragedies of Holy Week interpose between the joy of today’s triumph and the joy of Pascha night? Why did Christ need to ascend the Cross in order to save us? And why, after He has already won the victory, do we ourselves also need to follow in His footsteps, and embrace the Cross in our own lives? Why is all of this suffering and pain and misery and grief necessary?

St. Isaac the Syrian give us the clear and simple answer: because only through the Cross could God show the unfathomable greatness of His love for us, His wayward and unworthy children. As the Lord Himself said: “Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends” (John 15:13). And as St. Paul said: “For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet perhaps for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commends His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:7-8). Even as we mocked Him, betrayed Him, spit upon Him, and condemned the Lord of Glory as deserving the ignominious fate of the most wretched criminal, the immortal God loved us enough to die for our sakes, freely and unasked, while enduring every suffering and pain and torment and humiliation possible. Even knowing that not all of us would accept the greatness of the gift. Even knowing that those of us who do wish to accept it nevertheless trample upon it through our sins over and over again, time after time, on every single moment of every single day that has passed since that great and terrible day of His crucifixion.

All of this He did, in order that we “being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which surpasses knowledge, that [we] might be filled with all the fullness of God” (Ephesians 3:17-19).

But, my brothers and sisters, for this to happen the love of Christ must become our own love also. And that can only be accomplished when we too, freely and willingly, join our Lord and ascend the Cross together with Him. It is for this

reason, and this reason alone, that Christ enters today into the holy city triumphantly. And it must be for this reason, and this reason alone, that we also enter into the holy city of our hearts this Great and Holy Week: to be crucified together with our Lord, to become “partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when His glory shall be revealed, [we] may be glad also with exceeding joy” (1 Peter 4:13).

Hosannah in the highest. Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord. Amen.
(from holycross.org)

Today’s Epistle Lesson – St. Paul’s Letter to the Philippians 4:4-9 EOB

Brethren, rejoice in the Lord always! Again I will say, rejoice! Let your kindness be known to all. The Lord is at hand! Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition with thanksgiving, let your requests be known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your thoughts in Christ Jesus. Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are honorable, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are commendable, if there is any virtue or any praise, think about these things. What you learned, received, heard, and saw in me: practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.

Today’s Gospel Lesson – Saint John 12:1-18 EOB

At that time, six days before the Passover, Jesus came to Bethany where Lazarus (who had been dead and whom he had raised from the dead) lived. Therefore, they gave a supper for him there. Martha served while Lazarus was one of those who sat at the table with him. Then Mary took a pound of fragrance of pure nard, very precious; she anointed the feet of Jesus and wiped his feet with her hair. The house was filled with the fragrance of the ointment. Then Judas Iscariot, Simon’s son, one of his disciples and the one who would betray him, said, “Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred denarii and given to the poor?” Now, Judas said this, not because he cared for the poor, but because he was a thief, and having the money box, he used to steal what was put into it. But Jesus said, “Leave her alone! She has kept this for the day of my burial. For you always have the poor with you, but you do not always have me.” Meanwhile, a large crowd of the Jews learned that Jesus was there. They came, not only for Jesus’ sake, but also in order to see Lazarus whom he had raised from the dead. The chief priests even conspired to put Lazarus to death as well, because on his account many of the Jews were going over to Jesus and believed in him. On the next day, a great multitude had come to the feast. When they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, they took branches from palm trees and went out to meet him, crying out, “Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the Name of the Lord, the King of Israel!” Having found a young donkey, Jesus sat on it. As it is written: “Do not be afraid, daughter of Zion!

Behold, your King is coming, sitting on a donkey's colt." 16 His disciples did not understand these things at first, but after Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that these things were written about him, and that they had done these things to him. Now, the multitude that had been with Jesus when he had called Lazarus out of the tomb and raised him from the dead continued to testify about it. For this reason also, the crowd had come out to meet him, because they had heard that he had done this sign.

A Word From the Holy Fathers

Prooimion: You have come, O Lord, to the tomb of Lazarus, and you have raised him up after four days among the dead, after conquering Hades, O Powerful One. Taking pity on the tears of Mary and Martha, you have said to them, "He will be resurrected and he will rise up saying, 'You are the life and the Resurrection.'"

In considering the tomb and those in the tomb, we weep, but we should not; for we do not know whence they have come, and where they are now, and who has them. They have come from temporal life, released from its sorrows; they are at peace, waiting for the receiving of divine light. The Lover of man has them in his charge, and He has divested them of their temporal clothing in order that He may clothe them with an eternal body. Why, then, do we weep in vain? Why do we not trust Christ, as He cries, "He who believes on me shall not perish, for even if he knows corruption, after that corruption he will be resurrected and he will rise up saying, 'You are the life and the Resurrection.'"

The man of faith always has power for whatever he wishes, since he possesses a faith which lends strength to all things; from it, he gains power from Christ for whatever he asks. This faith is a great possession; if a man has it, he has control of everything. Mary and Martha had it and were renowned for it. When they saw that their brother Lazarus, a man of faith, had become ill, they sent word to the Creator, saying, "Hasten Master, for the one whom You live is ill; but show Yourself in time and he will be saved, for if the light of Your face appears, he will be resurrected and he will rise up saying, 'You are the life and the Resurrection.'"

Summoned by the faith of the women, He came, He who of His own free will became physician of soul and body, and immediately He spoke to His friends: "Arise; let us go into Judaea where we were once; for I have received a letter which I read with pleasure, for faith dictated it and infallible hope wrote it, and love sealed it. Why should I keep from you what has happened? Mary and Martha pray with faith to me on behalf of Lazarus, since he is now ill. If I go to him now he will be resurrected and he will rise up saying, 'You are the life and the Resurrection.'"

After He said this, the One who knows all thoughts remained for two days in the place where He was, as the Scripture says. He waited in order that the will of those who loved Him might be made clear; for Martha, Mary and Lazarus loved the Master – not just for one time or another time, but constantly, consistently, in times of relaxation and in times of anxiety. So it happened that Christ, seeing that this disposition was growing even greater, saved one of the sisters and honored the other; and as for Lazarus, He told them, “He will be resurrected and he will rise up saying, 'You are the life and the Resurrection.'”

But probably you are saying, “Make it clear to us: which one did He honor, and which one did He save? For we know that as far as Lazarus is concerned, Christ snatched him from the hands of Hades.” Mary was, as the Scripture says, the one whom He saved from seven devils, and also the one who anointed with myrrh the Giver of perfumes, and with her hair dried the feet of the One who cleansed all mankind from stain of the wily one. Martha He honored, since she served them with love; He inspired her with confidence when she was weeping about her brother, and He said to her, “He will be resurrected and he will rise up saying, 'You are the life and the Resurrection.'”

Again the Lord spoke to the disciples: “See now Lazarus, our friend has fallen asleep, and I wish to go and awaken him.” But they did not understand that the Redeemer referred to death as sleep; indeed, if Paul had been there, he would have known the word of the Word, for, instructed by Him, he sent to his churches epistles calling the dead those who have fallen asleep. For who can die if he loves Christ? How can he fall if he eats the living bread? He has in his heart the miracle as a phylactery, so that even if he perish, he will be resurrected and he will rise up saying, 'You are the life and the Resurrection.'”

When they understood that the Lord said sleep meaning death, for He told them plainly, “I go now to resurrect him,” they nodded to one another, probably communicating with head and hands, “We see a miracle before a miracle, and so we are afraid. For He did not learn that Lazarus was dead, which is what He had said; but that he was ill, and He predicts what we are going to see: Fear! Astonishment! Amazement! Some have said that He is mere man! They have not felt awe before His power when He says a word and immediately the one who was dead will be resurrected and he will rise up saying, 'You are the life and the Resurrection.'”

Now Jesus goes into Judaea, in His body; for in His divinity He cares for and occupies the whole world and even those from out of the earth like the miserable locusts. He who fills the universe arrived, then, arrived in Bethany to accomplish His divine work. When Hades heard the sound of His footsteps, he whispered to

Death, “What are those feet, O Death, which march over my head? Probably Jesus is coming; and again He has come to exact payment from us. Just as formerly the son of the widow escaped us, so now it is Lazarus. He will be resurrected and he will rise up saying, 'You are the life and the Resurrection.'”

“Victorious Death, unconquerable, listen to Hades, your friend, and be freed from your toil. Do not bring me nourishment for I cannot digest it. You bring me the bound dead, and when I swallow them, I vomit. When they are buried, I seize them and rejoice; but when they are spoiled I cannot hold them. Those who are within me, I exact for myself, and those whom I cause to be prepared I claim for myself; why, then, are you disturbed? Stop, make ready, and take possession of the friend of the Nazarene, O Death; be obedient, bearing in mind that he after a short time of four days will be resurrected and he will rise up saying, 'You are the life and the Resurrection.’”

When he heard these words, Death bellowed and, crying out with anger, he said to Hades, “You give me good advice as though you were free from evils; give advice to your stomach which you have never fed up until now, for indeed I grew weary of bringing food to you; yet you have never said, 'That is enough.' But you were as insatiable as the sea in receiving the rivers of the dead, never reaching satiety. Why, then, do you talk to me like this? First learn what you are teaching me; be calm and make ready. For the one whom you have in you, after a brief critical moment, will be resurrected and he will rise up saying, 'You are the life and the Resurrection.’”

“The life of mortals has always seemed as water to you; that is why you open wide and never cease to swallow them. Then let this be enough and do not become more full; for the feet which you hear, and I see they are threatening, are footsteps of one who is raging, and who is angered at you. As He draws near the tomb, He kicks at your gates, and searches for the contents of your belly. He has come, He who will purge you; and you have need of Him, for you are all distended. You will then be lightened if Lazarus, emptied from your entrails, will be resurrected and he will rise up saying, 'You are the life and the Resurrection.’”

“These are foul and shameful remarks you address to me, Hades, your friend. Seeing my misfortunes, you rejoice; but I because of these things weep over myself, for I see the limbs of Lazarus, already disintegrating before putrefaction, as though they seem to rise again; they work at reassembling, for they are crawling like ants when the worms withdraw, and the bad odor has disappeared. Alas, Jesus has really come; and He, sending His fragrance towards us, has perfumed the ill-smelling corpse. And now the man who perished will be resurrected and he will rise up saying, 'You are the life and the Resurrection.’”

When he heard this, Death cried out, and then he ran and seized Hades by the hand, and they both beheld the terrifying and awesome sight. The fragrance of the Son of God permeated His friend, and made ready his body for the call of the Giver of Life. It reordered his hair and reconstructed his skin, and put together his inner regions and stretched out his veins so that the blood could again flow through them and repaired his arteries, so that Lazarus be made ready when called. He will be resurrected and he will rise up saying, "You are the life and the Resurrection."

Hades and Death had barely seen all the things which took place, than they spoke to one another with sorrow: "Never will our empire be prominent and victorious. The tomb has become like a dye which changes corruption into life. The funeral monument is considered as a thread, and whoever wishes cuts it without any trouble, and it redeems whomever it wishes – brother, son, daughter – and those who dwell on earth laugh at us. Whether a man be slave or free, if he wishes, he despoils us. And whether a heavenly or earthly being, one has only to say a word, and immediately the dead will be resurrected and he will rise up saying, 'You are the life and the Resurrection.'"

"Formerly Elijah was a man on earth, and when he wished to raise up the son of a widow, it was through us that he offered pay for what he consumed. He consumed the nourishment of the poor woman; but we set the evaluation. The prophet was supported; Death was turned aside along with Hades when the young child was demanded back. The tears and prayers of the famished sent it to death. All the earth was ravaged by hunger and by thirst, for there was no rain; but the prophet said with rejoicing to the widow, 'You ask for your son; he will be resurrected and he will rise up saying, "You are the life and the Resurrection."'"

"The recent defeat has made us forgetful of our former fall, and henceforth Elijah and Elisha shall pass out of our minds as though they were nothing; but even now the wounds of their blows are to be found on us, especially of Elisha who performed miracles, for while he was alive he resurrected a corpse, and when he was dead, he snatched from death a dead body which had been thrown on him. This completely guarantees that no one of the faithful will die, but he will live, especially whenever he is connected with the bodies of the saints, he will be resurrected and he will rise up saying, 'You are the life and the Resurrection.'"

All these things, then, they said as they groaned and as they lamented about the resurrection from the dead, bemoaning themselves and all that was theirs. But the Creator arrived at the tomb of the dead man for whom He had come after asking, it seems, where Lazarus was buried. He asked, through irony, He who made man with His own hand. As He says, "Where does Lazarus lie?" He wishes to know what He already knew; just as He formerly asked, "Where are you, Adam?" Just so, He said, "Where is Lazarus?" Just a short time ago, He said to Martha, "He

will be resurrected and he will rise up saying, 'You are the life and the Resurrection.'"

Almighty Lord, merciful father of the humble, who saved Lazarus just now by the sound of Your voice – just so, from Your throne, allow those who have gone before us to see Your joyous countenance; and grant that we may live out our present span of life in peace, and that we may come to the end pleasing to You, so that, living or dying, we may be governed by Your will. Give us a sign, an order; tell us Your purpose to save us, for You shall not destroy the one who loves You, but You control him in life and summon him in death – And he will be resurrected and he will rise up saying, “You are the life and the Resurrection.”

– St. Romanos the Melodist, *On the Raising of Lazarus* (O.14)

The Spiritual Ladder of Holy Week

By Fr. George Economou

Eighteen weeks, or more than one third of the annual cycle, is the ecclesiastical liturgical cycle that revolves around the celebration of the Resurrection. This is from the Sunday of the Publican and the Pharisee until the Sunday of All Saints. It is a liturgical journey rich in religious and spiritual experiences. It is a sweet joyful-sorrow. Grief according to God which leads through the Cross to the Resurrection. And, as in all the liturgical traditions of our Holy Church, so also with this festal cycle, the wisdom of our Holy Fathers who set it in order is revealed – not to follow the formalism provisions but to get to the depth of the essence, which is none other than the eternal plan of the divine economy. In this direction, this text summarizes the events of Holy and Great Week as a noetic and spiritual ladder, which leads the faithful to venerate the revered Passion and glorious Resurrection of the Savior.

The **Saturday of Lazarus** can be considered the prologue - the first step - and the resurrection of Lazarus the friend of Christ shortly before the Passion of the Lord prefigures His own glorious Resurrection. Jesus, who wept as He went to the tomb, where His friend was buried, says to the one who was four days dead and commands with the familiar words: "Lazarus, come forth!" At that moment and with those words of His, who Himself is the Resurrection and the Life, Lazarus immediately resurrected. He who breathed the breath of life into Adam has life in Himself. This is how His own Resurrection from the dead is theologically interpreted after His descent into Hades, and it ensures our own expectation of the resurrection of the dead and the life of the age to come. With the expectation of the Resurrection, therefore, we enter Holy and Great Week, that we may journey together and be crucified together, as well as be resurrected together, and finally be united with our Lord.

On **Palm Sunday** we celebrate the bright and glorious festival of the entrance of the Lord into the Holy City of Jerusalem. He comes exactly as it was prophesied by Zechariah in the Old Testament: "Behold, your king is coming to you; he is just and endowed with salvation, humble, and mounted on a donkey, even on a colt, the foal of a donkey." Meekly He sits on the donkey, just and endowed with salvation, to suffer the perfect injustice and extreme humiliation, by His Passion, and especially the Cross, to grant salvation to fallen humanity. He fulfills the plan of Divine Providence and reopens the door of Paradise as a compassionate Father, who never ceases to love His children.

On **Holy and Great Monday** the Church remembers blessed Joseph the All-Comely. He was the son of Jacob, whom his brothers wanted to kill and repeat the horrible fratricide of Cain because of their envy. He suffered horrible bullying by his own brothers. God, however, protected him from death, and so was sold to traders and led as a captive to Egypt, where Potiphar purchased him, and after he refused to sin with his master's wife, he was unjustly slandered and imprisoned. Still even there, the grace of God acted on his behalf, and not only was he liberated, but he became the closest confidant and collaborator of Pharaoh. In the sufferings of the all-comely Joseph and in his love, by which he forgave his brothers, the Church saw the Passion of the Lord and His perfect love prefigured, which is why it has been set to honor his memory on Holy and Great Monday.

On the same day we also remember the event of the withered fig tree, which reveals the holy will of God that we are to struggle, and multiply our talents entrusted to us and increase our inheritance of grace, that we may bear spiritual fruit. Otherwise, as our Lord said at the Sermon on the Mount, "Every tree that does not bear good fruit, is cut down and thrown into the fire." This is what happened with the withered fig tree.

On **Holy and Great Tuesday** we remember the Parable of the Ten Virgins. With this parable we are called to cultivate watchfulness, alertness, as we do not know the day or hour when we will be called to the heavenly marriage of the Bridegroom Christ, and risk not having oil in our lamps. Let our hands not be empty, because we have no mercy and love, because we are perhaps unmerciful and hard-hearted before the needs of our neighbors.

On **Holy and Great Wednesday** we remember the harlot woman, who anointed the Lord with myrrh prior to His salvific Passion. One act and one person who will probably even scandalize us! How dare such a woman approach Jesus! Yet our Lord loves all His children. He does not exclude any of His children from salvation and teaches us not to judge, so that we will not be judged. And, indeed, this harlot woman was saved by repentance, just as the thief who was crucified with the Lord, and like Zacchaeus along with countless other examples in the history of the

Church. So also are we invited if we are sunk in our sins and in despair over our actions, and we are encouraged by the all-loving mercy of God to offer Him our broken and contrite hearts, to be healed and to have a clean heart created within us.

On **Holy and Great Thursday** the Church celebrates the washing of the disciples feet in the sacred Basin, the Secret Supper, the supernatural prayer and the betrayal. It is a practical teaching of extreme humility, the tradition of the Mystery of the Divine Eucharist, the amazing High Priestly Prayer of Gethsemane, as well as the false betrayal of Judas by a kiss. Jesus desired to eat with His disciples, and even prepares the details of the supper, and He welcomes them as a servant, washing their feet on His knees, and serving them at the table. There He delivers the mystery of mysteries and seals the New Testament with His Blood. He also gives Judas an opportunity at repentance by foretelling who it would be that would betray Him, but the lawless Judas was unwilling to change his mind.

On **Holy and Great Friday** we commemorate the salvific and horrible Passion, especially the Cross and Death of the Lord, as well as the salvific confession of the grateful thief on the cross. He was crucified for us and He suffered and was buried and became obedient even unto death, death by a cross.

On **Holy and Great Saturday** all flesh is silent, as we celebrate the entombment of the Body of God and the Savior's descent into Hades. But already the tomb cannot contain the Lord of Glory. And we have a foretaste of the joy of the Resurrection. At the Vespers of the Resurrection, which is chanted on the morning of Holy and Great Saturday, we proclaim once again while spreading out bay leaves: "Arise O Lord and judge the earth, for to You belong all the nations." Through this journey and ladder and our conscious participation in the wonderful life of worship in the Church this year is completed, just as in every year, Holy and Great Week and the spiritual struggle of the faithful. Since, then, we will hopefully arrive at Pascha Sunday, may we be made worthy of Divine Grace to venerate once again this year, the glorious and life-bearing Resurrection. (*from johnsanidopoulos.com*)

Holy Hieromartyr Artemon of Laodicea

For March 24: *Departing the world and approaching God, I am yours and deem to save me Artemon.* For April 13: *Artemon found crowns fitting for his cut off head.*

The Hieromartyr Artemon was born of Christian parents in Laodicea of Syria in the first half of the third century. From his youth, he dedicated himself to the service of the Church. He served the Church as a Reader for sixteen years. For his zeal in Church services, Bishop Sisinius ordained him deacon. Artemon also fulfilled this service with fervor and diligence for twenty-eight years, then he was ordained to the priesthood. In this position, Artemon served the Church of God for

thirty-three years, preaching Christianity among pagans. When the emperor Diocletian (284-305) began his fierce persecution against Christians, Saint Artemon was already old. The emperor issued an edict ordering Christians to offer sacrifice to idols.

Saint Sisinius, knowing of the impending arrival of the military commander Patricius in Laodicea, went with the priest Artemon and other Christians into the temple of the goddess Artemis. There they smashed and burned the idols, reducing them all to dust. Afterwards, Saint Sisinius and Saint Artemon gathered the flock into the church and fervently exhorted the Christians to remain firm in their faith and not to fear the threats of torturers.

When he arrived in Laodicea, Patricius celebrated a five-day festival in honor of the pagan gods, and then went to the temple of Artemis to offer sacrifice. He learned who had destroyed the temple, and went with a detachment of soldiers to the church where the Christians were praying. As he approached the church, Patricius suddenly felt a chill, and then developed a fever, which left him barely alive. They carried him home and put him to bed. "The Christians have put a curse on me, and their God torments me," he said to those about him. Although Patricius prayed to the idols, they did not relieve his sufferings. He sent a messenger to Saint Sisinius and asked for his help, promising to set up a gold statue of the bishop in the middle of the city. The Saint replied, "Keep your gold, but if you believe in Christ, He will heal you."

Patricius was afraid of dying, so he declared that he believed in Christ, and the affliction left him. But even this miracle did not affect the obdurate soul of the pagan. Although he did not touch Saint Sisinius, he did enforce the imperial edict against other Christians in the city of Caesarea. Along the way he encountered Saint Artemon, who was followed by six wild donkeys and two deer. When Patricius asked how he was able to control these wild beasts, Saint Artemon replied that he held them with the word of Christ. Patricius learned from the pagans that the old man was the same Artemon who had destroyed the pagan temple of Artemis. He ordered that Artemon be arrested and taken to the city of Caesarea. Saint Artemon went with the soldiers without fear, but he ordered the animals to go to Saint Sisinius.

Seeing the animals Bishop Sisinius asked, "Why have these animals come here?" A doe received the gift of speech from God and said, "The servant of God Artemon is being held by the impious Patricius, and is being brought to Caesarea in chains. He commanded us to come here to give you this news." Do not be astonished that the Lord, Who opened the mouth of Balaam's ass (Num. 22:28), also permits the doe to speak. The bishop sent Deacon Phileas to Caesarea to verify this information.

In Caesarea Patricius brought Saint Artemon to trial and tried to force him to offer sacrifice in the temple of Asclepius. In this pagan temple there lived many poisonous vipers. The pagan priest never opened the doors, nor did he place the sacrifice before the idol. But Saint Artemon, calling on the name of Jesus Christ, went into the temple and released the snakes. The pagans fled, but the Saint stopped them and killed the snakes by his breath. One of the pagan priests, Vitalius, believed in Christ and asked Saint Artemon to baptize him.

Patricius thought that Artemon killed the snakes by sorcery, and again he interrogated and tortured him. Then the doe which had spoken arrived in Caesarea. The doe lay down at the feet of the martyr, licking his wounds. By God's command the doe spoke again, denouncing the impious pagans. Addressing Patricius, the doe predicted that he would be seized by two birds of prey, and dropped into a cauldron of burning pitch. Patricius was enraged because he had been censured by a wild beast. He commanded his soldiers to shoot the doe with arrows, but she escaped. Afraid that the miracles performed by Saint Artemon would draw more people to him, Patricius gave orders to execute him.

They filled an enormous cauldron with boiling pitch, intending to throw the Saint into it. Patricius rode up to the cauldron on horseback to see if the pitch was indeed boiling. Then two angels in the form of eagles seized Patricius and threw him into the cauldron. His body was consumed so that not a single bone remained. Seeing the miracle, everyone ran away except Saint Artemon, who blessed and glorified God. When the Saint finished his prayer, a spring of water issued from the ground. Saint Artemon baptized the pagan priest Vitalius and many pagans, who had come to believe in Christ. On the following morning Saint Artemon communed the newly-baptized with the Holy Mysteries. Many of the baptized were ordained to the diaconate and priesthood, and Vitalius was made Bishop of Palestine. The hieromartyr Artemon, instructed by the voice of God, preached the gospel in Asia Minor. Then an angel appeared to him and transported him to the place which had been revealed to him, where he converted many to Christ. There Pagans seized the Saint and beheaded him in 303. His primary feast day is March 24th. [As that is the forefeast of the Annunciation, however, he is typically commemorated in services today – Ed.] *(from johnsanidopoulos.com)*

Nun-Martyr Martha of Diveyevo

Diveyevo Golgatha

After the Revolution of 1917 unprecedented of anti-religious persecutions began in Russia. The St. Seraphim-Diveyevo Convent, among many other monasteries, was affected by them.

In 1919, Diveyevo was turned into a labor artel [a cooperative association]. A needlework artel existed until the convent was closed. Sketes and farmsteads were confiscated and looted, harvests were taken away from the sisters by the authorities, so the nuns had to buy grain and potatoes with their own money for sowing. The sisters were not allowed to use water from the pumping-works and they had to walk to the river for water. But at the convent itself everyday monastic life continued, churches were not closed yet and services were celebrated.

In 1920 the holy relics of [St. Seraphim of Sarov](#) were publicly opened and several years later transferred to a museum of atheism for desecration. Thus Father Seraphim even by his flesh shared in the suffering of the whole Church.

In 1927 the meaning of a famous prophecy of St. Seraphim became clear: “The time will come when my orphans, like peas, will be cast through the Nativity gates.” On the feast of the Nativity of Theotokos the atheistic Soviet authorities started dissolving the community and within a week the convent was closed. In his festal sermon at the early morning Liturgy Bishop Seraphim (Zvezdinsky) of Dmitrov said, addressing himself to the sisters: “The convent is being closed, but you will remain bound to your monastic vows. Now the [bitter] cup is being given to each of you—and will you be able to drink it worthily? Up to now you have burned as one large candle, but henceforth you will be separated into smaller ‘individual’ candles. You need to preserve this fire.”

On the same night, Bishop Seraphim and Archbishop Zinovy (Drozdov) of Tambov (+ 1942; a hieromartyr) who then lived in Diveyevo, together with the abbess, the clergy and senior sisters were arrested, while the rest of the nuns scattered all over the neighborhood. Most of them settled in neighboring villages, including the very village of Diveyevo, and the abbess (after the dispensation) with some of the sisters moved to the town of Murom. For the majority of them it was the beginning of the path of confession of Christ—prisons, exiles and hard labor awaited many of them...

Among the saints who were canonized as the New Martyrs and Confessors of the Russian Church, six saints from among the convent’s nuns and clergy are especially venerated at Diveyevo along with two archpastors, whose lives were by providence inseparably linked with the convent, and the women martyrs who suffered in the Suvorovo village not far from Diveyevo.

All the New Martyrs and Confessors of Diveyevo are commemorated on the following days: the Synaxis of All Saints of Diveyevo (June 14/27), the Synaxis of the New Martyrs and Confessors of the Russian Church (January 25/February 7, if this day falls on a Sunday, otherwise—the first Sunday after Jan. 25/Feb. 7), and the Synaxis of the Saints of Nizhny Novgorod (the second Sunday of September).

Nun Martyrs Pelagia and Martha (Testova)

Sts. Martha and Pelagia were sisters. They were born into a poor peasant family in the village of Arga of the Tambov province. Both decided to devote their lives to the service of God. In 1901, at the age of fourteen, Pelagia who was the younger sister, joined Diveyevo Convent, and soon after that her elder sister followed her example.

At the end of summer 1919, when the convent was turned into a labor artel, it was suggested that some of the nuns be sent to help with the harvest on fields belonging to the Red Army officers' families. The convent's council rightly pointed out that the sisters were emaciated due to lack of food, couldn't work in the fields, and besides, their own harvest was still not reaped. Novice Pelagia worked as a dressmaker and a mower, was a member of the council and "the manager of the convent's work forces." She tried to defend the sisters and refused to implement the requirements of a representative of the authorities. As a result she was arrested and sentenced to three years of imprisonment.

A commission was sent to Diveyevo Convent to examine "the counter-revolutionary activities" of the community but in the end it found the nuns innocent. The nuns were freed, and the convent's council reinstated. The convent existed for another eight years, officially as an artel.

After the closure of the convent Sts. Pelagia and Martha lived at different churches, just as other Diveyevo sisters found shelter in the homes of believers. Novice Nun Martha made her home in the gatehouse attached to the church of the Razvilye village of the Bor district, and Novice Nun Pelagia at the church of the Vorobyevo village of the Arzamas district. The two saints never met again in their lifetime, though their life paths had many similarities from that moment on. The nuns, for the most part, read at the church and prayed. The faithful held the saintly sisters in high regard and often came to them, seeking their advice or asking to pray for them or their relatives. The faithful helped the nuns survive by sharing food and money with them.

Both nuns were arrested in November 1937 and accused of "counter-revolutionary agitation" and "anti-Soviet activity." During interrogations they gave direct and clear responses and did not falsely accuse themselves. Three weeks later, on December 13 and 14 respectively, they were sentenced to eight years in the Karlag forced labor camp in Karaganda (Kazakhstan).

The new martyrs were not to meet again in this life: the camp was big, and their camp locations were different. It is unlikely that they knew that they were working almost side by side. In spite of the unbearable penal servitude and very painful diseases, the sisters toiled conscientiously and with great patience bore this cross

for the Lord's sake. Even the labor camp's administration noted the good quality of the sisters' work, the care of the tools, and performance of the labor norms.

The camp became the final abode in the life of each of the nuns, thus their love and faithfulness to Christ were tested for the last time. Novice Nun Martha lived in the labor camp for three years. Terribly exhausted by illnesses and hard work, she died of cardiac decompensation at the camp's hospital on April 13/26, 1941, and was buried in the graveyard of the Spassky camp of Karlag. Sister Pelagia died of cancer at the camp's hospital on November 3, 1944, and was interred in the camp's cemetery near Zhartas village.

The name of Venerable Martyr Pelagia was included in the Synaxis of the New Martyrs and Confessors of the Russian Church on October 6, 2001, and that of Venerable Martyr Martha—on October 7, 2002. (*from orthochristian.com*)

Also Commemorated Today

Martyr [Crescens](#) of Myra in Lycia (see also April 15);
Martyrs [Dada, Maximus, and Quinctilian](#) at Dorostolum (286) (see also April 28);
Glorification of Hieromartyrs Michael Chafranov of Sebastopol, Basil Uglyansky of Simferopol, John Dernov of Kazan (& 3 sons) priests (1918)
Saint [Martius](#), Abbot of Clermont, Gaul (c. 530)
Martyr [Theodosius](#);
Saint [Guinoch \(Winnoc\)](#) of Buchan, bishop (838)
New Hieromartyr [Stephen](#) (Bekh) bishop of Izhevsk (1933).
Martyr [Thomais](#) of Alexandria (476). (14th on Greek Cal)
Martyr [Christopher](#) the Sabbaite
Martyr [Eleutherius](#) of Persia (4th c.).
Martyr [Zoilus](#) of Rome (4th c.).
St. Martyrius, archbishop of Jerusalem (486).
St. [Arsenios](#), archbishop of Suzdal (1615)
St. [Herman](#), abbot of Svyatogorsk Monastery (1890)(Ukraine)
Grand Duchess [Alexandra](#) Petrovna (Anastasia in monasticism) of Kiev, foundress of Pokrov Monastery (1900)(Ukraine)
Translation of the Relics of New-Martyr [George](#) of Cyprus
Martyr-Prince [Hermenegild](#) of the Visigoths (585)
St. [Ursus](#), Bishop of Ravenna (396)
Ven. [Theodosia](#), daughter of Emperor Hadrian, with Gerontius the Eunuch (2nd c.)

Holy Week Services

On **Palm Sunday**, we celebrate Matins (**8:45 AM**) and Divine Liturgy (**10 AM**) as usual; blessing of palms will be done right before Divine Liturgy (come early!).

After social, we will serve Bridegroom Matins (about **1 PM**).

On **Wednesday** evening, we will celebrate the service of Holy Unction at **6 PM**.

On **Thursday**, we will celebrate the Institution of the Eucharist (DL) at **8 AM**.

Also on Thursday, we will read the Passion Gospels at **6 PM**.

On **Friday**, we will chant the Royal Hours of Great Friday at **8 AM**.

Also on Friday, we will commemorate the Burial Service of our Lord at **8:30 PM**.

On **Saturday**, we will celebrate the Harrowing of Hell (DL) at **9 AM**.

Also on Saturday, we will celebrate Resurrection Matins at **8:30 PM**.

On **Holy Pascha**, the only service will be Divine Liturgy at **9:30 AM**.

We will also serve a Divine Liturgy on **Bright Wednesday** (on the Feast of the Great-martyr George) at **8 AM**.

Social Team for April 20

It's our annual Paschal Potluck! Bring something with meat and/or dairy to share!

Upcoming Diocesan Events

2025 Sts. Joachim and Anna Senior Retreat

Our Diocese is pleased to announce its sixth annual Sts. Joachim and Anna Senior Retreat which will take place at Camp Nazareth Retreat and Conference Center in Mercer, PA from May 2-4, 2025. The Retreat will feature keynote addresses by Very Rev. Nicholas Ferencz. You can read [Fr. Nik's biography here](#). His Eminence Metropolitan Gregory is inviting all our Diocesan Seniors, ages 55 and over, to join him for 2 days of fellowship, prayer, and fun. The Theme of the Retreat – **Matthew 22: The BIG Questions We should ALL want to Talk about and Answer!** The schedule will include worship, fellowship, learning, fun, time for reflection and relaxation, time spent with our Diocesan Hierarchy, and great activities!

Online Registration is now open!! Visit [2025 Senior Retreat](#) to register for the event. Visit [campnazareth.org](#) for more information. You may also call (724-662-4840) or email the Camp at campnazareth@acrod.org for more information.

Don't miss out on our sixth annual Sts. Joachim and Anna Senior Retreat!
Register today!

Registration closes Friday, April 25, 2025.

Camp Nazareth Family Camp 2025

Friday, May 30 – Sunday, June 1

Our Diocese is pleased to announce its 11th annual Family Camp at Camp Nazareth this year in conjunction with Family Day. The event is exactly what it sounds like. Families “camping” together in the Camp cabins and participating in a weekend of services, games, discussions, activities and challenges that are all designed to help families deepen their relationship with God and with one another.

This year’s theme – *The “Puzzle” that is Your Family... Discovering why God has put us Together!* Our families were given by God. He has joined the “pieces” of our family’s “puzzle” together. Come discover what all the “pieces” mean to your family and what they mean to a world in need of your family! The schedule includes time to pray together, have fun together, relax together and learn together. In addition, kids and parents will also have their own activities and discussions separate from one another as well. This year’s Keynote Speaker for the adults is Rev. Timothy Paproski, our parish priest at St. Nicholas Church in Warren, OH. This year’s leader for the kids is Pani Hailey Paproski. We are excited to have both of them as part of this year’s Family Camp!

Family Camp is scheduled for Friday, May 30 – Sunday, June 1, 2025.

Come enjoy time with your family and with other Diocesan families in the beautiful environment of the Camp! Each year we have a wonderful time together! Come, be a part of it!

Don’t miss out on this opportunity for you and your family. Space is limited, so be sure to register soon! Online Registration is NOW OPEN! Visit the the following link to register:

[2025 Family Camp](#). Visit campnazareth.org for more information.

Camp Nazareth Alumni

Calling all Camp Nazareth Alumni!

We are thrilled to announce our 2nd Annual Camp Nazareth Alumni Online Event! This is for all former Campers, Staffers, Volunteers, and Clergy who have graduated from Camp! Please join us for an opportunity to see and meet Camp alumni from every era!

Share the news with your friends and fellow alumni and we look forward to reconnecting with all of you!

When: Tuesday May 6th, 2025

Time: 7:00pm EST

[Register: CN Alumni -5/6/2025](#)

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, 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.)