

SOBORNOST

St. Thomas the Apostle Orthodox Church

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

Rev. Father Seamus Murray, Pastor
(703) 598-6729

Fr.Seamus@tuta.com

www.apostlethomas.org

American Carpatho-Russian Orthodox Diocese

*ECUMENICAL PATRIARCHATE
OF CONSTANTINOPLE*

SERVICES

Wednesday: Reader Vespers 6:30 PM

Saturday: Confession 4:30 PM

Great Vespers 5:00 PM

Sunday: Matins 8:45 AM | Sunday

School 9:30 AM | Divine Liturgy 10 AM

January 11, 2026 – Afterfeast

& Sunday After Theophany | St. Theodosius the Cenobiarch

*Theodosios abbot of the common life, as a common monastic you lost your life. ** On the eleventh the Cenobiarch departed this life.*

This Saint lived during the times of Emperor Leo the Great (457-474), and reached the times of Emperor Anastasios Dikoros (491-518). He was from a village in Cappadocia called Mogarissus, and was the son of pious and faithful parents, his father called Proairesios and his mother called Eulogia. Having become a monk, he went to Jerusalem, and from there to Antioch, and he met Saint Symeon the Stylite, from whom he learned about the increase he would receive in virtue, and that he would become a shepherd of many rational sheep. Then he went to live in quietude near a hesychast man, whose name was Longinus, and he occupied himself with self-control to such an extreme, that the renowned one would only eat once an entire week, and during a period of thirty entire years he did not eat a complete loaf of bread.

When St. Theodosios the Great [the Coenobiarch] founded a monastery, he had only seven monks in the beginning. In order to confirm these monks in the remembrance of death, he ordered them to dig out a grave. When the



grave was finished, Theodosios stood above the grave surrounded by the seven monks, and said, "Behold, my children, the grave is ready! Are there any among you who is ready for death, in order to be buried in this grave?" One of them, Basil by name and a priest by rank, fell to his knees and sought a blessing from Theodosios to die. Theodosios ordered that a memorial service for the soul be held for Basil: the third, the ninth and the fortieth day as is the custom for the deceased. When the fortieth day memorial service was completed, Basil, completely healthy, laid down and died. He was buried in the new grave. On the fortieth day after his burial, Basil appeared among the brethren in church one morning and chanted with them. In the beginning, only Theodosios saw him and he prayed to God that He open the eyes of the others. The entire brotherhood looked and saw Basil among them. One brother, Letios, out of joy spread his arms and wanted to embrace Basil, but he vanished and Letios heard Basil's voice saying; "Save yourselves, fathers and brothers, save yourselves."

He exercised therefore every form of virtue, and the thrice-blessed one attained such a height of ascent, that he was made worthy to perform extraordinary miracles. He had lit the unlit coals without fire at the place where he was to establish the foundation of the monastery. He delivered a woman from a flow of blood that approached him with faith. He from one grain of wheat, which he blessed, caused the storeroom of the wheat to overflow.

He appeared invisibly, and removed the child from the depths of a well which he had fallen into. He also ceased the death of children of a woman, who before they were born into this life, would be taken by death. This mother had not become better after being totally barren, but the Saint caused her to be able to have many children by his prayer. The Saint also banished a cloud of locusts by a mere censure. He also kept the commander of the army of the East named Kerykos from being wounded at war, for he had garbed himself with the robe of the Saint made of hair and it was like protective armor. And the earth condemned unjustly to famine and unable to sprout, he liberated from its dryness, by bringing down rain by his prayers.

The Saint also foretold the destruction that the city of Antioch would suffer by an earthquake. He also rescued many people from a storm at sea, by appearing to all those who were in danger. He was also a teacher of virtue to many disciples, and urged many to have the same zeal and imitate his own

virtue through his words and deeds, and this followed with them entering into the household of the Lord. After conducting himself in this manner, and being glorified on the earth, he reposed in peace, and delivered his spirit into the hands of God. His Synaxis is celebrated in the apostolic Temple of the Chief Apostle Peter. (*adapted from johnsanidopoulos.com*)

Today's Epistle Lesson – St. Paul's Letter to the Ephesians 4:7-13 EOB

Brethren, grace has been granted to each one of us according to the measure of Christ's gift. Therefore, God says, "When he ascended on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts to men." Now, what does "he ascended" mean, if not that he first descended into the lower parts of the earth? He who descended is the [same] one who also ascended far above all the heavens, so that he might fill all things. He gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some shepherds and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints, for a work of ministry, to build up the body of Christ. This is until we all attain to the unity of the faith and to the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, having reached the very fullness of Christ.

Today's Gospel Lesson – Saint Matthew 4:12-17 EOB

At that time, when Jesus heard that John had been arrested, he withdrew into Galilee. Leaving Nazareth, he came and lived in Capernaum, which is by the sea, in the region of Zebulun and Naphtali, so that what had been spoken through Isaiah the prophet might be fulfilled: 'The land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, toward the sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles, the people who sat in darkness saw a great light, to those who sat in the region and shadow of death to them light has dawned.' From that time on, Jesus began to preach and to say, "Repent! For the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand."

Homily on the Sunday After Theophany

By St. John of Kronstadt

"The people who sat in darkness have seen a great light, and upon those who sat in the region and shadow of death, Light has dawned" (Matt. 4:16, Is. 9:2).

Thus the Prophet Isaiah once spoke, foreseeing by the Spirit of God the coming into the world of the unfading Light - Christ. Five hundred years after this prophetic vision, the people sitting in darkness actually saw a great light, and among those who sat in the region and shadow of death by their very deeds a great light shone. But what is this darkness and what is this light that the Prophet speaks of here? The darkness mentioned in this prophecy is spiritual darkness, much worse than ordinary darkness; the darkness of ignorance of the true God, the deep darkness of superstition and idolatry. Such spiritual darkness embraced all idolaters

before the appearance of the radiant Sun of truth on earth, and once upon our ancestors - the Russians, as well as all people, excluding the people of God, the chosen people, the Jews. These people, sitting in darkness, saw, with the coming into the world of the Son of God, that great light which shines in the darkness and the darkness does not comprehend it (Jn. 1:5), they saw that life-giving Source of all light, which is Christ the Lord, who by His coming to earth dispelled the deep darkness of ignorance of the true God everywhere and called people from darkness into the marvelous light of true knowledge of God.

And what terrible consequences, my brethren, there were for the human race from this dark night of ignorance, which for so long covered the ancient world. Running through our thoughts the time before the birth of the Savior, we meet here people who were guided in life and faith by their own darkened minds and corrupted hearts, by their passions, immersed in wickedness and depravity. At that time, according to the word of the Prophet, they joined themselves to the senseless cattle and became like them (Ps. 48:13), among them there was no one doing good, there was not even one (Ps. 13:3). Faith in the one true God, the Most Holy Being, had no place, with the exception of the Jewish people, among the people of those times. The glory of the incorruptible God was changed into the likeness of the image of the corruptible man, and birds, and four-legged creatures, and reptiles (Rom. 1:23). People did not know their Creator and gave the honor due to Him to various creatures, which themselves should serve their Creator. Instead of worshiping and serving with fear and trembling the Master and Judge of the world, man bowed down to the creature, said to the tree: "You are my father," and to the stone: "You have begotten me" (Jer. 2:27).

Being so grossly mistaken in their faith in God, people were no less mistaken in regard to themselves, believing the purpose of their lives to be in pleasure, as many do now, only in perishable and fleeting goods, not knowing why they were called to live in this world, not knowing the dignity and high purpose of their souls. That is why they led an impious and depraved life, like the life of senseless beasts. The devil, this age-old enemy of human salvation, exhausted all his hellish cunning, all his evil efforts, so that from his dark region he would pave the way for all vices into the poor human race, who "loved darkness more than light" (Jn. 3:19). According to the word of the Apostle, people at that time "walked in lewdness, lusts, drunkenness, revelries, drinking parties, and abominable idolatries" (1 Pet. 4:3). And this wickedness, this debauchery made them sons of perdition, the prey of hell. There was no Deliverer; He had not yet appeared. The best of the people of that time, it is true, sometimes rose significantly above their contemporaries by a certain purity of their thoughts and feelings, by some knowledge of the true God, of the goal and purpose of the human soul, and therefore they even tried, according

to their strength, to please Him. But they too were not alien to errors and vices of another kind, inseparable from the ubiquitous darkness of idolatry. But the main thing is that they could never by their own efforts reach the proper knowledge of the true God, they had no faith in the future Redeemer of men, which alone justified man before the judgment of God's truth; there was no "Light which gives light to every man coming into the world" (Jn. 1:9), and therefore there was no possibility for them of salvation.

Such, my brethren, are the truly terrible and deplorable consequences of this terrible night of ignorance! But now the predetermined end of time is coming. The corruption of people has reached its last extreme. Man himself feels complete impotence and exhaustion in the struggle with sin and strongly desires and expects higher help - and the merciful God sends His Only Begotten Son to earth: to give omnipotent help to completely exhausted and needy humanity, to disperse the thick darkness that covered humanity and to illuminate those sitting in the darkness and shadow of death with the light of His Divine wisdom. Here He is coming to resolve the condemnation of the first-created Adam, whose crime cast all his descendants into this darkness, and He Himself, as God, not needing purification, cleanses fallen man in the Jordan, in which, having killed the enmity that separated man from God with an impassable abyss, He grants people a peace that surpasses all understanding. They are enlightened by Holy Baptism and already begin to taste that spiritual, heavenly peace that the Savior promises to all who labor and are burdened in this world. People no longer follow their own passions in their lives and, like lost sheep who have again received a Good Shepherd, follow His voice and go by Him. Instead of the former likeness to senseless cattle, the lost likeness of God now appears in them in all its purity and power; instead of the distorted image of God, an image appears, restored in all its grandeur, so that people become a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people" (1 Pet. 2:9) - and become capable of showing virtues in their own lives.

Faith in the one, true God is established in the human race; it quickly spreads through cities, entire kingdoms, throughout the whole world. Already the Apostle of the Gentiles thanks the Roman Christians for the fact that their faith is preached throughout the whole world (Rom. 1:8); already the other Apostles joyfully greet their numerous Churches with the knowledge of the Light of truth. All nations strive to worthily worship the one, incorruptible, invisible, immortal God and, having come to know His infinite greatness and holiness, no longer change His glory into the likeness of the image of the corruptible man and birds and four-footed creatures and reptiles (Rom. 1:23). People now know well themselves, their soul, its heavenly origin and high purpose in the future; they know that God has given them eternal life and this life is in His Son; that great and precious promises

have been given to us, so that through them we may become partakers of the Divine nature, having departed from the corruption that is in the world through lust (2 Pet. 1:4). The world, which "lies under the sway of the wicked one" (1 Jn. 5:19), with the coming to earth of the Source of all good, gradually begins to emerge from the depths of evil. The darkness passes, and the true Light already shines (1 Jn. 2:8). People are joyfully hastening to be enlightened by Him and are seeking to enjoy His saving fruits. The works of the devil are destroyed; the times of his dark dominion over the world are past; heaven is reconciled with the earth; the kingdom of God has come near for people; instead of children of wrath they are called sons of God. Man has been granted all the Divine powers that lead to life and piety (2 Pet. 1:3), and it has depended and now depends exclusively on his will to be either a member of the heavenly kingdom or the prey of hell. Such are truly the most saving and comforting consequences of this heavenly Light, which has illuminated those sitting in darkness and the shadow of death!

My brethren! At our very entry into the world, we are illumined by Holy Baptism; from our very birth we bear on ourselves the sacred name of Christians, we are called sons of light. It seems that none of us wants to count ourselves among those poor people who once sat in darkness and of whom there are still some to this day; no one thinks of himself that, despite the high title of Christian, he remains in darkness, especially the so-called enlightened people, with the modern gloss of education. But, brethren, the word of God indicates among us also those who, although Christians, remain in darkness. Who are these unfortunates? They are those of us who hate our brother! Yes, brethren, this is truly a bitter truth and it seems difficult to believe that in the light of the knowledge of God we remain in darkness. Nevertheless, however, this is an undoubted truth. Not to mention whether we accept with our mind and heart and with all our soul all the dogmas of our holy faith, whether we try to increase by our good works the grace imparted to us in the mysteries of the Church, or whether we criminally abuse these mysteries and thereby, therefore, condemn ourselves to remain in darkness, because we do not do the works of faith. Not to mention all this, let us listen to what the beloved friend of Christ, John, says this time, and whom he places in darkness; he who says to himself that he is in the light, says the Apostle of God, but who hates his brother is still in darkness!

We are all brethren one to another in Christ! Who will not agree that the sin of hatred towards one's neighbor is almost the most common, very often, much more often than other sins, repeated among us? And how many different kinds of this sin are there? Do not envy, blaspheme, slander, murder and many others come from one main root - hatred? Yes, these sins reign most of all in the human race. If we add to this that love for one's neighbor is closely connected with love for God, so

that whoever, according to the Apostle, does not love his brother cannot love God, then we will agree that all those who hate their neighbors remain in darkness to this day. A terrible truth!

What should we do, brethren, to belong in all righteousness to the flock of Christ, to people walking in the light? What means shall we choose for this? Spiritual illnesses, like physical illnesses, are mostly cured by means directly opposite to them. Therefore, the real illness - hatred - can and should be treated in the same way. If hatred towards one's neighbor is the reason why we remain in darkness, then love - a virtue completely opposite to hatred - can put us in the light. Love is the beginning and soul of all virtues, and therefore he who has it will do everything necessary for his stay in the light, to fulfill the whole law: because "love," as the Apostle Paul says, "is the fulfillment of the law" (Rom. 13:10). And he who fulfills the law of Christ is a grace-filled son of God, and, consequently, a son of the grace-filled Light.

Christ the King, Holy Light, Who turns from the darkness of ignorance those who sing to You with faith! Enlighten us with Your commandments and the light of Your countenance, and grant Your peace to us who cry out to You from the darkness of sin. Amen. (*from johnsanidopoulos.com*)

A Word From the Holy Fathers

Christ has appeared to the world, and having adorned the unadorned world, he filled it with radiant joy. He took upon him the sin of the world and overthrew the enemy of the world. He sanctified the fountains of waters, and enlightened people's souls. Miracles were joined to greater miracles; for today the earth and the sea shared the grace of the Savior, and all the world has been filled with joy, and the feast of today points to the increase in the miracles, greater than the preceding feast. For in the preceding feast of the nativity of the Savior the earth rejoiced, because it was bearing in the manger the Lord of all; but in today's feast of the epiphany of God the sea is extremely glad, and it rejoices because it partakes, through the river Jordan, of the blessings of sanctification.

On the preceding feast an imperfect child was displayed, portraying our imperfection; but on today's feast he is seen as perfect, suggesting that the Perfect was born of the Perfect. There the star that emerged in the East revealed the one who was born; but here the Father, who engendered him, from above bears witness in favor of the one who is baptized. There Magi journeyed from the East and offered him gifts as for a king; but here angels arrived from the heavens and offered him the service fitting to God. There he was bound in the bonds of swaddling-clothes, here he unbinds the bonds of our sins. There the King put on the purple robe of the body, here the Source puts on the river.

Come then, observe incredible wonders: “the sun of righteousness” (Mal. 4:2) being washed in the Jordan, and fire being baptized in water, and God being sanctified by a man. Today the whole creation sings hymns of praise: “Praised is the one who is coming in the name of the Lord” (Ps. 117:26). Praised is the one who is always coming, for he came now not for the first time. “Praised is the one who is coming in the name of the Lord.” The one who is coming with providence also through things created, preserving intact the grandeur of heaven, dexterously steering the course of the sun, commanding without confusion the multitude of stars, mixing with firm hand the air to be breathed, warming again with firm hand the inmost parts of the earth to bear fruit, controlling the many-waved sea with the smallest grain of sand, unerringly guiding the courses of rivers. Looking then at all these things, let us say, “Praised is the one who is coming in the name of the Lord.” Who is he? Tell clearly, O blessed David! “God the Lord, and he appeared to us” (Ps. 117:27). Not only the great prophet David states this, but also the apostle Paul bears witness to him, saying, “For the grace of God has appeared for the salvation of all people, training us” (tit. 2:11). Not to some, but to all; for to all Jews and all pagans he grants salvation through baptism, presenting baptism as universal good.

Come, observe a strange inundation, much better and greater than the one seen in the time of Noah. There the waters of the flood killed the human race, but here the waters of baptism, through the one baptized, brought life to those who died. There Noah constructed an ark from wood not liable to decay, but here Christ, the spiritual Noah, prepared the ark of the body from the chaste Mary. There Noah sealed the ark on the outside with a secure layer of pitch, but here Christ, with the security of faith, made the ark of the body firm. There a dove was carrying an olive branch, and disclosed the fragrance of the Lord Christ; but here the Holy Spirit, coming in the form of a dove, reveals the compassionate Lord. But the excess of the Lord's humility amazes me, because it sufficed not that the Perfect, born of the Perfect, be born as a child of a woman, because it sufficed not that the one who shares the throne with his Father take up the form of a servant; but also that he approaches baptism as if he is a sinner! But let the common good not be a stumbling block for those who hear this; for Christ, the Lord of all, is baptized, not because he is in need of purification, but because he thus dispenses in two ways what is beneficial for us, in order that he may grant grace that sanctifies the waters, and urge every person on to be baptized.

For it says, “Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to John, to be baptized by him” (Mt. 3:13). Brothers and sisters, what was it that was effected at that time? That which is impossible to conceive! For what was seen was beyond human eyes; the mind trembles, the tongue flees from the mouth, because it dares not tell what

cannot be told! Therefore, when John saw the Lord approaching him, he was afflicted in the heart with a fierce struggle, and while prostrating and laying himself down, and touching his feet, he beseeched him as follows: “Why, almighty One, do you force me, the powerless, to do what is beyond my power? I cannot do this! How shall I dare baptize you? When is fire purified by grass? When does clay wash a fountain? How shall I, the guilty one, baptize you, the Judge? How shall I baptize you, O Lord? I see no blemish in you. You did not become subjected to the curse of Adam. You committed no sin; for even though you descended, yet you transgressed not. What are you doing, Lord, by forcing me to do what is beyond my power? I never dared do anything to grieve you. Like a servant, attached to his master, I beforehand made known your advent. While still in her womb, I hired my mother's tongue, and proclaimed you God of the world. I prepared one and all to meet you.”

“For tell me, O Lord, how could the sun endure to see the Lord of all being insulted by an audacious slave, and not immediately consume me with its flaming rays, like it did the Sodomites? How will the earth endure to see him, who sanctifies the angels, being baptized by a man and a sinner, and not, having immediately opened its mouth, swallow me, like it did Dathan and Abiros? And how shall I baptize you, O Lord, who associated not with anything that was defiled from the very beginning?

Unsown you came forth as fruit from a womb which knew no birth pains. How then shall I, defiled man that I am, sanctify God, the sinless God? “I need to be baptized by you, and you come to me?” (Mt. 3:14). O Lord, you sent me out as baptist, and I did not disobey your commandment; for urging one and all on to be baptized, I said over and again, “Confess your sins to the Lord, for he is good” (Ps 105:1). For the one who came is not without mercy; he is a good Son born of a good Father. He reveals his goodness not for a short while, and immediately changes his mood. But “his mercy is for ever” (Ps. 105:1). And since his mercy is immeasurable, therefore the heavenly powers continually praise him in song as follows: 'Praised is the one who is coming in the name of the Lord; God is Lord, and he appeared to us' (Ps 117:26). The sun of righteousness appeared, and dispersed the darkness of ignorance. The heavenly Shepherd appeared, and drove the wolves of the devil away from the beautiful flock. The only Son of the Father appeared, and granted through baptism sonship to those who believe. The Life of all appeared, and through his death killed Death, and as the immortal God deemed those who died worthy of life.”

But while those things were accomplished thus, the Father, taking from above pleasure in the exceeding humility of his Son, all of a sudden pushes the gates of heaven apart and utters a thundering voice full of a Father's disposition. “This is

my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased” (Mt. 3:17). And I order that the mind of those who hear, err not regarding the baptist and the one being baptized, the Holy Spirit comes in the form of a dove, and points out the one being baptized, and gives witness; because to him belong the glory and the power, forevermore. Amen.

– St. Proclus, Archbishop of Constantinople, *Homily 7, On Theophany*

Authority and Obedience in the Church

Abridged from The Lord of Spirits podcast “Apostolic Succession” by Fr. Andrew Stephen Damick and Fr. Stephen De Young, posted July 15, 2025

SDY: Just like we saw with Moses, apostolic succession has these two elements corresponding to the body and the soul, the body being the physical – the laying on of hands, this chain reaching back to the apostles that could be documented. And then there is a soul to it, which is a sharing of the apostolic faith that gives life to the ministry of that person - but the person who’s had the laying on of hands, if they don’t have the soul part, still has the authority. No Donatists here. An atheist who has been properly ordained - the things he does, the baptisms he does are baptisms. The Eucharist he does is the Eucharist. The rulings he makes are the rulings he makes - unless he gets deposed. But even when he’s deposed, that’s not retroactive - like “Oh we gotta go back and rebaptize all those people baptized because he was a bum, he was faithless, he was like one of the Pharisees.” Again, remember what Christ said to the Pharisees. He said a lot of bad things about them personally and about their life or the way they conducted themselves and said they’re on their way to hell, but didn’t say, “Therefore don’t listen to anything they tell you.” They still had that authority....

I do not have a episcopal authority. I can’t rule on things authoritatively... I can be asked my opinion, but I have a bishop. And if my bishop comes in and says, “Father Stephen, you’re out to lunch” and rules that I’m wrong, his ruling is what everyone has to follow, including me. Not mine. I have to be obedient to him. He can suspend me. He could defrock me. He is in authority over me....

I’m not the final authority. I’m trusted by my bishop to handle most day-to-day small matters. Remember Moses? Moses had the appointed the presbyters, the elders, to deal with the day-to-day stuff, and they brought all the big stuff to him. Moses is the bishop of this situation....

We ended the last episode talking about how Moses couldn’t be wrong. Bishops can’t be wrong in the Orthodox Church. It’s logically impossible for a bishop to be wrong. Here’s what we mean by that. Remember how we qualified this with Moses. We’re not saying that bishops are always right about their politics, always right about math and science. We’re not saying they’re always right about

predicting tomorrow's weather. That's not what we're talking about. We're not even talking about a bishop can't be a heretic - cause there's been a bunch of those.

ASD: This is him making the rulings within his diocese. It'd be like, for instance, when my wife says, "This is what we're having for dinner." That is the decision that has been made, and that is what is being cooked, and that's what's gonna be on the table, because she's the one cooking it. She can't be wrong about that, because she's the one who has that authority to do that. So when the bishop says, "This is the rule in my diocese," he can't be wrong. We're going to do this with his authority.

SDY: He makes the rulings to apply the canons and the scriptures.

ASD: And just like Jesus when he's talking about the Pharisees, he has all kinds of criticisms for them, but he never tells people to disobey them or ignore them. He might even criticize the rulings they're making, but He still doesn't tell people to disobey them. It's like when my wife and I are dealing with my children, she doesn't agree with every single ruling that I make. She doesn't. But she will say things sometimes like, "Well, that is what your father said, so that is the rule."

SDY: Yeah. So I'm just gonna go ahead and court controversy and irritate a bunch of people. If an Orthodox bishop says, "I don't want you to chrismate people anymore. We're gonna receive everyone by confession. No baptisms, no chrismations. Anybody who's been baptized in any vaguely Christian church, receive them by confession," he's not wrong. Everyone who is received that way is just as legitimately an Orthodox Christian as the people received in another diocese by another bishop, where that bishop says, "We're going to baptize everyone, regardless of their background." All those people who he baptizes are just as legitimately Orthodox Christians as all of these people received by confession - and they're both right. Both bishops are correct.

ASD: and what and what people who would flip their lids about that may not know is that both of those methods are sanctioned by the ecumenical councils. So even a bishop who makes that decision, it's not like he's making something up; he's not. Those are actually in the ecumenical councils, which, again, are decided by bishops.

SDY: That's their job. That's their authority. They have the authority to do that. Once they do that, it's done. The people are received.

ASD: There's an article, I think it's from St. Diadochos of Photiki, where he was preaching some sermon about baptism, and someone who had been received into the church who'd been a part of a heretical group who'd been received in the church through some other method, I think chrismation or whatever, heard the

sermon and was so moved by it that he freaked out, and said, “I didn’t really receive an Orthodox baptism and please do it.” This guy had been in the church for years. And the saint said to him, “I would not dare to baptize you. You were received already. You are part of the church. Period.” Because whoever the bishop was that had received this guy, he was authoritative, and the saint recognized that, and he didn’t say, “Well, I have another opinion.”

SDY: What about this canon, if a bishop ordains someone divorced, if a bishop allows somebody to continue to serve as a priest after being divorced, if a bishop allows a priest to remarry after being widowed and to remain a priest – and these are all things that have happened in various times in various places, and not just all contemporary times either, if you’re thinking like, “Oh, well, there’s all this loopy-goosy stuff **now**.” No, 15th, 13th, 12th century.

So every bishop who made every one of those rulings was right when they made those rulings, and sometimes the same bishop when he made the opposite ruling in a different case was right when he made the opposite ruling.

ASD: Well, what if a bishop really is off the reservation? Because the truth is that sometimes bishops do get overruled - but the really important thing to notice is, by whom?

SDY: The fact that the church is not a democracy, the fact that your bishop is not accountable to **you**, does not mean he’s not accountable. First of all, there’s that whole conciliarity thing we were talking about. It takes two or three bishops to make a bishop, but the bishops of the synod could get together and depose a bishop and make him not a bishop anymore. Take that authority away from him. Now if that authority's taken away from him, as we said before, that doesn’t invalidate all the stuff he did while he was a bishop and while he had that authority. That’s all done....

Moving forward, you could go in a different direction, but you can’t undo what he did. So they’re accountable to the other bishops. If the other bishops break communion, he’s not an Orthodox bishop anymore. If they depose him, then he’s not a bishop anymore. So there is that direct accountability there. But more importantly, and yes, this is more important, and part of our problem as modern people is we don’t really think this is more important. I don’t know if it’s 'cause we don’t really believe in God or if it’s because we don’t really believe in the resurrection of the dead, but it’s gotta be one of the two. For some reason, we think accountability to God doesn’t count. This is what the Old Testament is talking about when it says, “The fool says in his heart that there is no God.” A lot of of us are a little foolish. We somehow think that if someone escapes this life without being held accountable, “Oh they have to be accountable to **me** or somehow

they've gotten away with it", and there was no accountability. I would much rather be judged by fellow humans than by God. Which is more important, that we expose the bad financial dealings of some bishop or other church authority figure **now** so that **I** can hold them accountable, or they die in their sins, and **God** holds them accountable? Now if our desire to hold them accountable came from a desire to see them repent so they wouldn't face the judgment of God that would be different, but I don't see a lot of that. I think it's anger - personal anger and pride, and, "You have to be accountable to **me**. You have to answer to **me**."....

This is why Saint James, one of those bishops with great primacy, in his epistle said, "Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness." There's a greater judgment - and I've said this a bunch in my Bible study and stuff, but this is real. When you stand in front of Christ's judgment seat on the last day, you're gonna have to give an account for yourself. If you are married you're gonna have to give an account to Christ for yourself and your spouse. If you have married and have children, you'll have to give an account to Christ for you, for your spouse, and for each of your children, because you have authority over them as their parent. I, as a priest, am going to have to give an account for myself, for my wife, and for every one of my parishioners who I've ever had at any church I've served in. My bishop is gonna have to give an account for every single clergy, person, and every single human in every one of his churches. People don't want that when they want to get ordained. It's a lot of things they want. They don't want that awesome responsibility. They don't want that weight on their shoulders. They don't want to shoulder the sins of the people who they're in authority over. That's the reality of what it means, that's the accountability that our bishops have that goes with that authority. The bishop who decides to let somebody get remarried is gonna have to explain to Christ why that was the right thing to do, why that was the best thing to do for that person's salvation. These aren't decisions that bishops make lightly, and having the authority and responsibility to make them is not a light thing. This isn't just theoretical or imaginary or a parable. This is real. I'm gonna have to explain to Christ why I told people what I tell them in confession - why I advised them to do certain things or not do certain things; all of that. Every word I'm gonna have to give an account for, so nobody's getting away with anything; nobody's unaccountable. And the kind of accountability that people with authority in the church have, being accountable to some people, a group of people, or a parish council or something like that - that's nothing. Get out of here with that. That's all ego if you think that.

This is the real deal. This is where the rubber meets the road. This is what actually being an Orthodox Christian, not a Protestant who's read a lot of church fathers

and owns a copy of the Rudder, but being an actual Orthodox Christian - this is part of what it means - is realizing what authority means, realizing what real accountability before God is, and therefore submitting and being obedient to the authorities that God has put over you.

ASD: One of the things you'll hear people cynically say sometimes when talking about church authority is, "They just expect us to pray, pay, and obey," be good little churchgoers, give your money, be obedient, and as Americans that sounds horrifying. "That's that's a recipe for oppression. This country wasn't founded on that" - and it's true. It wasn't. But that is what Christianity is actually - to pray, to worship God, to request all the good things for our salvation from him; to pay, to give to Christ, whether our time, our money or our talents; and to be obedient.

I know that a lot of people, when they encounter the Orthodox Church for the first time and they see that we have this tradition of obedience, I think because the United States of America does not have a tradition of obedience, [but] has a tradition of disobedience, and really lauds that - examine everything for yourself, decide for yourself - then seeing that obedience is part of the Orthodox tradition, interpreting that, understanding that, and practicing that can be very skewed.

On the one hand, you have people who will go to their their priest, their confessor, their spiritual father for a blessing to do a lot of different things that they could just decide for themselves really. It's extreme, and I think that some of that probably comes from reading monastic related literature, where that kind of obedience is the norm in a monastery, although maybe not as extreme as some people might think.

On the other hand, it's really a sense of, "Well, I'm gonna decide whether what my priest or my bishop or my patriarch or my holy Synod are doing is right or wrong - and if they're right, then I'll go along with it; but if they're not, then I'll not go along with it. I'm gonna resist. I'm gonna call them to account. I'm gonna expose them." Emotionally, you know, it feels great to do that. You feel righteous. You feel you're the underdog, stick it to the man, speak truth to power, all that kind of stuff, but as we have seen very, very clearly throughout the scriptures and throughout the whole history of the church, that is not the way that erring church leaders are held accountable.

As we just said, it doesn't mean that they're never held accountable, but that's not the way they're held accountable. I do not hold my bishop accountable. I do not. Speaking as as a presbyter, as a priest, I've had people tell me, "Well if your bishop said or did this then you shouldn't go along with that; you should resist." I'm sorry, but that is a complete misunderstanding of particularly what the role of the presbyter is. A presbyter's job is to execute the policies of his bishop, because the bishop is the pastor of the diocese, of every parish. He is the pastor, and if a

presbyter cannot obey his bishop and execute his will, then he cannot be his presbyter. Either he needs to be deposed from the priesthood or he needs to request a release to be with a different bishop. This idea of priests in resistance - that is not a thing. That is not how this works. It's not how it works.

It's very, very clear with regards to the office of the priesthood, but the truth also is that we all are supposed to practice this obedience - and yes, it is a freely chosen obedience, but that doesn't mean that you listen to every word in every command and decide for yourself. "Okay, I'm gonna choose this one. I'm gonna choose this one. I'm gonna choose this one." No no no no no no. That would be like deciding for myself. You know, "I'm gonna be faithful to my wife in this way, but not this way; this way, but not this way." Either I'm faithful to my wife or not. I'm either obedient to my bishop or not. Obedience means that sometimes my will is not gonna be in alignment with the will of the one to whom I owe that obedience, and if I only obey when my will aligns with his will, then that's not obedience - not to him anyway. That's obedience to **me**. As we said earlier, that's doing what's right in my own eyes, and scripture is very very clear about that. Yes, you can have your conscience bound by the spiritual authority over you. That is the way that it works. You cannot get around that. You can't. There is no Orthodox tradition of rising up against your spiritual leadership and throwing them down. That is not a thing. That doesn't mean that spiritual leadership in the Orthodox Church is absolute. It's not. It is under God. It is under a bishop. It is under a synod of bishops. Ultimately, it's under God, and that actually makes a difference.

Father, you said earlier, "I'm not sure if people believe in God or not when they act this way." I think it's a functional atheism, like, "God's not gonna do anything and so we have to, brothers and sisters, we have to," or maybe worse, "Our righteous anger is the Holy Spirit moving us." No, it's not. The Holy Spirit doesn't move you to do things that are against the holy scriptures. That's not true. That doesn't happen. It's not a thing. I know that's probably hard here for a lot of people, but I can tell you that maturity in Christ is learning to let go of the need to be in charge. That is part of what it means to be mature, and even church leaders who have a lot of authority, the really mature ones are the ones who have set aside the need to be in charge. And so since they've set aside that need, that desire for that, then they're actually able to exercise that authority as servants, as those who are leading in love, and I've met a few holy people in my life, including some who are bishops, and when someone has that holiness it's certainly a lot easier to obey them. A lot easier. You do it out of love and joy, 'cause you want to. But there's also times when their holiness is not apparent to us. I'll just put it that way. It doesn't mean they're not holy; they might be, and I can't see it. And we know from the scriptures that those who live under oppressive and wrong and messed up

leadership, the righteous receive that as from the Lord as being a call to repentance, that we're being afflicted so that we may repent. It doesn't mean that that wicked ruler isn't wicked. God uses wicked rulers over and over again in the scriptures; over and over again. But it does mean that receiving that wicked rule is for our repentance, so for suffering, the response is to repent. God will hold the oppressors accountable. Our task is to be faithful and yes, pray, pay and obey, because it turns out that that's actually the path of the kingdom of heaven. It really is.

Saints Ethna and Fedelma of Connaught

Saints Ethna and Fedelma (Ethna and Fedelma) are sisters who feature in one of the most beautiful stories from the hagiography of Saint Patrick. The pair boast an impressive aristocratic pedigree, being the daughters of King Laoighaire and grand-daughters of Niall of the Nine Hostages. Their story is set against the backdrop of the struggle between Christianity and paganism as Saint Patrick comes to Croghan, the royal residence of the kings of Connaught. There he encounters these daughters of King Laoighaire. We can let Saint Patrick's biographer, Tirechan, take up the story:

Afterwards, then, before sunrise, holy Patrick came to the well that is called Clebach on the eastern slopes of Cruachu. They sat down beside the well, and suddenly there appeared two daughters of King Loiguire, Ethne the fair and Fedelm the red. These had come, as is the women's custom, to wash in the morning. They found the holy gathering of bishops with Patrick by the well, and they had no idea where they were from or what was their nature or their people or their homeland; but they thought that maybe they were men of the *si* or the gods of the earth or phantoms.

The girls said to them: "Are you really there? Where have you come from?"

Patrick replied to them: "It would be better for you to confess faith in our true God than to ask questions about our origin."

The first girl asked: "Who is God and where is God, and whose God is he, and where is his house? Has your God sons and daughters, gold and silver? Is he alive forever? Is he beautiful? Have many people fostered his son? Are his daughters dear and beautiful to the men of this world? Is he in heaven or on earth, in the sea, on mountains, in valleys? Give us some idea of him: how may he be seen, how loved; how may he be found – is he found in youth or in old age?"

In reply, Patrick, filled with the Holy Spirit, said: “Our God is the God of all people, the God of heaven and earth, of the seas and the rivers, the God of the sun and the moon and of all the stars, the God of the high mountains and of the deep valleys. He is God above heaven and in heaven and under heaven, and has as his dwelling place heaven and earth and the sea and all that are in them. His life is in all things; he makes all things live; he governs all things; he supports all things. He kindles the light of the sun; he builds the light and the manifestations of the night, he makes wells in arid land and dry islands in the sea, and he sets the stars in place to serve the major lights. He has a son who is coeternal with him and of like nature. The Son is not younger than the Father nor the Father than the Son; and the Holy Spirit breathes in them. The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are not separate. Truly, now, since you are daughters of an earthly king, I wish that you will believe and I wish to wed you to the king of heaven.”

And the girls said, as if with one voice and from one heart: “Teach us most diligently how we may believe in the heavenly king, so that we may see him face to face. Direct us, and we will do whatever you say.”

And Patrick said: “Do you believe that you cast off the sin of your father and mother through baptism?”

They replied: “We believe.”

“Do you believe in penance after sin?”

“We believe.”

“Do you believe in life after death?” “Do you believe in the resurrection on the Day of Judgment?”

“We believe.”

“Do you believe in the unity of the Church?”

“We believe.”

And they were baptized, and a white veil placed on their heads. They demanded to see the face of Christ, to which the saint said: “Unless you taste death, and unless you receive the sacrament you can’t see the face of Christ.”

They replied: “Give us the sacrament, so that it will be possible for us to see the Son, our bridegroom.”

They received God's eucharist and slept in death. Their friends laid them both in one bed, covered with their clothes, and raised a lament and a great keen.

The druid Caplit, who had fostered one of them, came and wept. Patrick preached to him, and he believed, and the hair of his head was shorn. And his brother Mael came and said: "My brother believed in Patrick, but I don't. I will convert him back again to heathenism".

And he spoke harsh words to Patrick and to Mathonus. But Patrick preached to him and converted him to God's penance. The hair of his head was shorn. Its style had been that of the druids – "*airbacc giunnae*", as it is called. From this comes the most famous of Irish sayings, "Calvus ['bald', i.e. 'Mael'] and Caplit: the same difference" – they believed in God.

When the days of keening the kings' daughter came to an end they buried them beside the well of Clebach and made a round ditch in the fashion of a *ferta*. That was the custom of the heathen Irish. But we call it *relic*, that is, the remains of the girls.

And the *ferta* was granted in perpetuity to Patrick and his heirs after him, along with the bones of the holy girls. He built an earthen church in that place.

This occurred in AD 433. (*from omniumsanctorumhiberniae.com*)

Also Commemorated Today

[*Follow the links below for more information. - Ed.*]

- Venerable [Michael](#) of Klops Monastery, fool-for-Christ (Novgorod) (1452).
- New Hieromartyrs [Nicholas, Theodore](#) & Vladimir priests of Cherdyn, Perm (1919).
- New Hieromartyr [Vladimir](#) (Fokin) of Novo-Elovskoy (Yenisei province)(1919)
- St. Vladimir confessor, priest (1932).
- Venerable [Theodosius](#) of Antioch (412).
- "Chernigov-[Eletskaia](#)" Icon of the Most Holy Theotokos (1060).
- Martyr [Mairus](#) (c. 300)
- Synaxis of the [Myriads](#) of Angels
- St. [Stephen](#) of Placidia near Constantinople (Greek).
- Sts. [Theodore and Agapius](#) of Apamea in Syria.
- St. [Theodosius](#) of Mt. Athos, metropolitan of Trebizond (1392)
- Hieromartyr [Hyginus](#), pope of Rome (142) (Celtic & British).
- Venerable Romilos the Hermit of Veddin (1375) (Greek).
- Venerable [Vitalis](#) of the monastery of Abba Serid (Seridos) at Gaza (609-620)

St. Joseph of Cappadocia (Greek).
New Martyr [Nikephoros](#) of Crete (1832)
St. [Boadin](#) of Ireland, Hermit in France (unk)
St. [Brandan](#), Abbot (Beandan, Breandan) (5th c.)
St. Hernin, hermit near Carhaix (540) (Brittany) (also May 7)
St. Tevew (Tethviu), priest-monk of Redon (c. 880) (Brittany)
Hieromartyr [Alexander](#), bishop of Fermo (c. 300) (Italy)
St. [Anastasius](#), abbot of Castel Sant' Elia (c. 570) (Italy)
St. [Honorata](#), nun at Pavia (c. 500) (Italy)
St. [Leucius](#), first bishop of Brindisi (c. 180) (Italy)
Sts. [Paldo](#), Taso, and Tato, brothers & successive abbots of San Vincenzo (8th c.) (Italy)
Martyr [Salvius](#) (unk) (N. Africa)

Pray for our priests and seminarians!

Prayer is powerful, and we need more priests in our Diocese. Metropolitan Gregory is asking that each one of us pray daily that we have more vocations to the priesthood. He also wants us to pray by name for our clergy and seminarians--they aren't sick! The clergy that we are to pray for are: Fr. Kevin Greenwood, Fr. Andrew Gromm, and Deacon Donald Koch. The seminarians are: Deacon Maximus Cannaverde, Bradley Shaffer, Nicholas Cizin, John Bonnewicz-Coffey, John Fedornock III, Clay Raburn, Spyridon Raburn and Ignatios Leonardo (please also pray for Joshua Horner, who is taking a break from seminary to work full-time). We started this four years ago, and we already see its fruit – Fr. Seamus was on this list the last time I ran it!

Prayer for vocations

Master of all, You promised us, “I will be with you always, even until the very end of the world,” and You have taught, “I will build My Church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” Mindful of this pledge, we beseech Your great goodness to inspire men to the Holy Priesthood, the service of Your Holy Orthodox Church, so that she may properly be able to fulfill Your will for Your people in this age. There are children to baptize, the sick to heal, and the dying to care for. There is the Bread of Life to distribute, and the Word of God to teach. There are sins to forgive, and charity to be done in Your Name. Send Your Church in this hour and in every age “vessels of clay” to be instruments of Your presence. Hear us, O Lord, and have mercy.

Prayer for the priesthood

O Lord Jesus Christ, Good Shepherd of Your sheep, light the fire of ardent love in the hearts of all Your priests, that they may ever and in all things seek only Your

glory. Remember especially, Lord, our Metropolitan Gregory, and our spiritual father Seamus, who are laboring in Your vineyard for the salvation of all those whom You have entrusted to them. Remember also, O Lord, our priests Fr. Kevin Greenwood, Fr. Andrew Gromm, and Deacon Donald Koch, and seminarians Deacon Maximus Cannaverde, Bradley Shaffer, Nicholas Cizin, John Bonnewicz-Coffey, John Fedornock III, Clay Raburn, Spyridon Raburn, Ignatios Leonardo and Joshua Horner. Make their lives as holy as the word they preach. Keep them from being discouraged. Hear their prayers for our salvation. Give them wisdom and courage to proclaim Your truth. Make them priests after Your own heart. For You are a merciful God who loves us, and to You we give glory, together with Your eternal Father and Your all-holy, good and life-giving Spirit, now and ever and forever. Amen.

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. Seamus & Family, Fr. Joseph & Family, His Grace Bishop Neofitos of Eldoret and Northern Kenya, Patty Blaydoe, Bennett family, Tatyana & Slava Chumak & family, Luke & Marlena Cooper, Roberta Corson, Tina Crull, Marlene Doukas, Alaina Espinal, Angelo Espinal, Linda A. Georgiev, Sandi Hebel, Howl family, John M. Janowiak, Johnson family, Andrew Kinn, Kopan family, Helen, Brian, Luke and Mia Mahony, Valentina Makowelski, David & Kathryn Newman, Bobby Nutter & family, Nicholas Pavlik, Weston Perry & family, John Reece, Mary Reed, Marge Rusnak, Rose Song, Dennis Thomidis, Fr. Nectarios & Ia, Mother Virginia Marie & the Carmelite Nuns of Port Tobacco, the suffering people of Ukraine & the Middle East, and those in need of our prayers. (Please advise Fr. Seamus of changes.)