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

Wednesdays in Great Lent: Liturgy of Presanctified Gifts 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

March 1, 2026 – 1st Sunday in Great Lent (Sunday of Orthodoxy | n the Temple

The Inner Unity of the Triodion

The sense of joy and thanksgiving, already evident on the Saturday of St. Theodore, is still more apparent on the first Sunday in Lent, when we celebrate the Triumph of Orthodoxy. On this day the Church commemorates the final ending of the Iconoclast controversy and the definitive restoration of the holy icons to the churches by the Empress Theodora, acting as regent for her young son Michael III. This took place on the first Sunday in Lent, 11 March 843. There is, however, not only a historical link between the first Sunday and the restoration of the icons but also, as in the case of St. Theodore, a spiritual affinity. If Orthodoxy triumphed in the epoch of the Iconoclast controversy, this was because so many of the faithful were prepared to undergo exile, torture, and even death for the sake of the truth. The Feast of Orthodoxy is above all a celebration in honor of the martyrs and confessors who struggled and suffered for the faith: hence its appropriateness for the season of Lent, when we are striving to imitate the martyrs by means of our ascetic self-denial. The fixing of the Triumph of Orthodoxy on the first Sunday is therefore much more than the result of some chance historical conjunction.

The Triodion gives the text of a special 'Office of Orthodoxy,' which is held at the end of Matins or, more commonly, at the end of the Divine Liturgy on this Sunday. The Office celebrates not only the restoration of the holy icons but, more generally, the victory of the true faith over all heresies and errors. A procession is made with the holy icons, and after this extracts are read from the synodical decree of the Seventh Ecumenical Council (787). Then sixty anathemas are pronounced against various heretics dating from the third to the fourteenth century; 'Eternal Memory' is sung in honor of the emperors, patriarchs and fathers who defended the Orthodox faith; and 'Many Years' is proclaimed in honor of our present rulers and bishops. Unfortunately in many parts of the Orthodox Church today this impressive service has fallen into disuse; elsewhere it is performed in a greatly abbreviated form.

Before the Triumph of Orthodoxy came to be celebrated on the first Sunday, there was on this day a commemoration of Moses, Aaron, Samuel and the prophets. Traces of this more ancient observance can still be seen in the choice of Epistle reading at the Liturgy (Heb. 11:24-26, 32-40), and in the Alleluia verse appointed before the Gospel: 'Moses and Aaron among His priests, and Samuel among them that call upon His Name.' (*from The Lenten Triodion, translated by Mother Mary and Archimandrite Kallistos Ware, St. Tikhon's Seminary Press, 2002*)

Today's Epistle Lesson – St. Paul's Letter to the Hebrews 11:24-26, 30-12:2 EOB

Brethren, by faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing to share ill-treatment with God's people rather than enjoy the pleasures of sin for a time. He considered the disgrace of the Anointed a greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt because he had his eyes fixed on the reward.

By faith, the walls of Jericho fell down, after the people [of the city] had been encircled for seven days. By faith, Rahab the prostitute did not perish with those who were disobedient because she had had received the spies in peace. What more shall I say? Time would fail me if I mentioned Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel, and the prophets. Through faith, they overpowered kingdoms, administered justice, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, became strong in weakness, grew mighty in war and caused foreign armies to flee. Women received their dead by resurrection. Others were tortured, not accepting their deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection. Others were tried by mocking and scourging, yes, by chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn apart, they were tempted and they were slain with the sword. They went around in sheep and goat skins, being destitute, afflicted and ill-treated. And yet the world was not worthy of them! They wandered in deserts, mountains, caves, and the holes of the earth.

All of them received a testimony through their faith but they did not receive the promise because God had made provision for us to have something better, and they were not to reach perfection apart from us. And so, seeing that we are surrounded by such a great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight and the sin which so easily entangles us. Let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith. For the joy that was set before him, he endured the cross, despising its shame, and he has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

Today's Gospel Lesson – Saint John 1:43-51 EOB

At that time, being determined to go out into Galilee, Jesus met Philip and said to him, "Follow me!" Now, Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. Philip found Nathaniel and said to him, "We have found the one of whom Moses in the law and the prophets, have written: Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph!" Nathanael asked him, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" Philip replied, "Come and see!" As Jesus saw Nathaniel coming to him, he said about him, "Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no deceit!" Nathanael asked Jesus, "How do you know me?" Jesus answered him, "Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you." Nathanael replied, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are King of Israel!" Jesus said to him, "Because I told you, 'I saw you underneath the fig tree,' do you believe? You will see greater things than these!" He said to Philip, "Amen, amen, I tell you; hereafter, you will see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man."

Homily Before Communion on the First Sunday of Lent

By Archpriest Rodion Putyatin

Before you come, listeners, to Holy Communion, let's talk about what benefit we get when we partake of the Body and Blood of Christ, and with what feelings we should approach this Awesome Mystery.

What benefit do we get when we partake of the Body and Blood of Christ? We are most closely united with Jesus Christ, so that Jesus Christ then begins to abide in us, and we in Him: "He who eats My Flesh and drinks My Blood abides in Me, and I in him" (John 6:56), says Jesus Christ. What exactly is happening in us then? It is impossible to explain and realize this, it is impossible, one can only feel it a little, and even then not completely.

What happens to you when, tormented by hunger and thirst, you take ordinary food and drink? Then you seem to begin to live a new life, you become more cheerful, healthier and ready for work. By this similarity, one can somewhat explain what happens to the soul of that person who partakes of the Body and Blood of Christ. His soul then begins to live a new, divine life; he feels some kind of unearthly joy,

he is illumined by some kind of heavenly light, and is enlivened by some kind of extraordinary readiness for goodness.

By uniting with Jesus Christ, the communicant thus becomes a partaker of eternal life, so that his soul would directly soar to Jesus Christ in paradise if he had to die at that moment: "He who eats My Flesh and drinks My Blood has eternal life" (Jn. 6:54), says the Lord. That is why, listeners, those people die so calmly, so merrily, who, before death, have time to partake of the Body and Blood of Christ. What should they be afraid of when they are most closely united with Jesus Christ, the source of eternal life? Thus, by partaking of the Body and Blood of Christ, we are most intimately united with Jesus Christ and become partakers of eternal life.

However, the Body and Blood of Christ produce these grace-filled actions only in the soul of the one worthy of communion, and whoever eats and drinks unworthily does not receive remission of his former sins, on the contrary, becomes even worse, even more sinful, even further away from Jesus Christ, he eats and drinks self-judgment (1 Corinthians 11:29). Similarly, the most wholesome food and the most wholesome drink are often disastrous for the sick.

So, listeners, are you worthy to partake of the Body and Blood of Christ? For six days you fasted, for six days you went to the church of God, for six days you lamented over your sins, you were at the confession of your confessor, but even after all this, are your souls so pure that Jesus Christ, the Most Holy of Holies, could enter and dwell in them? Oh, no, even eternity seems to be not enough for us to adequately prepare ourselves for Holy Communion, many of us even now, in these sacred moments, do not leave vicious thoughts and desires. What are we sinners to do after this? How to proceed to Holy Communion? With the consciousness, with the heartfelt awareness of one's unworthiness. The more one recognizes himself as unworthy of Holy Communion, the more he is worthy of it.

Yes, listeners, do not imitate those false Christians who, as if realizing themselves unworthy of Holy Communion and as if not wanting to come with the same sins, never come, and do not take communion. Believe me, they only say that they are unworthy, but in fact they don't feel that way, and they say it only because they don't want to prepare for Holy Communion. They do not want to fast for six days, they do not want to part with their vicious habits for six days; in this way they speak to cover up their laziness, carelessness. A patient who is in great pain, will he hesitate to take the medicine just because it may not give him relief for a long time? Of course not. It is better to feel relief for one minute than to suffer incessantly. Similarly, a Christian who recognizes himself as a sinner, unworthy of Holy Communion, who is really afraid that after Communion he will not fall into his former sins, will never leave Communion. For him, the day is dear, the road and the minute in which he will stay without sins with Christ.

So, listeners, approach Holy Communion, only approach with fear and faith. Let no doubts confuse you; to be with Jesus Christ even one day is valuable; to have the Savior in the soul one minute is important. Oh, that He would be with us all the days of our life and forever and ever! Amen. (*from johnsanidopoulos.com*)

A Word From the Holy Fathers

Grant me contrition, estrangement from evil, and perfect amendment, for I am sunk in the depths of bodily passion and separated far from You, O God, the King of all; and I have no other hope but You. In the abundance of Your goodness save me, the prodigal, O Jesus all-powerful, the Savior of our souls.

When he had been cleansed by fasting, great Moses saw the God for whom he longed. Eagerly follow his example, O my humble soul; make haste to cleanse yourself from evil in the day of abstinence, and so you shall behold the Lord who grants you forgiveness, for He is all-powerful and loves mankind.

Let us now set out with joy upon the second week of the Fast; and like Elijah the Tishbite let us fashion for ourselves from day to day, O brethren, a fiery chariot from the four great virtues; let us exalt our minds through freedom from the passions; let us arm our flesh with purity and our hands with acts of compassion; let us make our feet beautiful with the preaching of the Gospel; and let us put the enemy to flight and gain the victory.

Come, let us cleanse ourselves by almsgiving and acts of mercy to the poor, not sounding a trumpet or making a show of our charity. Let not our left hand know what our right hand is doing; let not vainglory scatter the fruit of our almsgiving, but in secret let us call on Him who knows all secrets: "Father, forgive us our trespasses, for You love mankind."

– Lenten Triodion, *Stichera from Sunday Evening Vespers, 2nd Week of Lent*

Homilies on the Commonwealth of the Church – The Laity

by Metropolitan Hierotheos of Nafpaktos

The Church is the Body of Christ, as the Apostle Paul writes, and it has individual members, but it is also a community of theosis, as Saint Gregory Palamas writes.

This means that with Holy Baptism and Holy Chrismation we enter the Church, we become members of the Body of Christ, we participate in the Divine Liturgy, we partake of the Body and Blood of Christ and we proceed on the path of theosis, with our participation in the Mysteries and with the observance of the commandments of Christ and asceticism according to Christ.

Baptism is an introductory Mystery, because through it we are introduced to the Church, which as the Body of Christ has various members. The Apostle Paul

writes that, just as the body has many members, the same happens with the Church, which does not consist of one member, but of many. Everything is needed in the Church, and these are the head, the eyes, the ears, the sense of smell, the hand, the foot, and no one can say that they do not need the other (1 Cor. 12:12-27). And immediately afterwards he writes: "And God has placed in the Church first apostles, secondly prophets, thirdly teachers, then powers, even gifts of healings, helping, administration, kinds of languages" (1 Cor. 12:28).

This means that all the members of the Church, Clergy and laity, have various gifts, they are all gifted, each one has their own gift and there must be unity among the gifted members, so that God is glorified through them all. Thus, pastors have the gift of shepherding Christians, and Christians have the gift of being shepherded to their salvation. From this perspective we must see our life in the Church.

Therefore, the laity are not simply the members who do not have any mission in the Church, but they are the gifted members, who have the excellent gift of being members of the Church, of receiving the Grace of God through Baptism, Chrismation and in general through the Mysteries, who have the possibility, with appropriate preparation, to partake of the Body and Blood of Christ, who can pray and call upon God their Father with the Lord's Prayer, the "Our Father", who can pray with the prayer "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, the sinner", that with the Mystery of marriage they can create a Christian family, and many others.

With the Mysteries of Baptism, Chrismation and Divine Communion, people are "the holy people of God", the "Christ-pleasing people" of God who belong "to the royal priesthood" (1 Pet. 2:9). The Fathers of the Church define what this "Royal Priesthood" consists of, the "holy people of God".

Saint Dionysios the Areopagite calls the Christians who participate in the Holy Mysteries and belong to the Body of Christ the "Order of Theoria" of the Church, because through the act they reach the various degrees of theoria (divine vision), and this is done through the participation of the purifying, illuminating and perfecting/deifying energy of God. This is a great honor.

The sacred Theophylact interprets that the Christians who have the gift of belonging to the Church are prophets, kings and priests in the general sense of the term. That is, he writes, God anointed us and sealed us prophets, kings and priests. He says that everyone who is baptized is a prophet, because he sees what no eye has seen and what no ear has heard; he is a priest, because he must offer himself "a living sacrifice, holy, pleasing to God"; he is a king because he became the son of the king of all Christ and because he reigns over "inappropriate thoughts" and transcends "the whole world".

The Clergy are chosen from these gifted Christians to fulfill a special mission, a special work within the Church, to shepherd these gifted Christians. In this sense there are shepherds who must guide the rational and blessed flock to the Kingdom of God. Thus, there may be shepherds who have not previously had a shepherd and are not shepherded by God at the same time, and there are shepherds who respond to the purpose of the Christian life and consider Christ their shepherd and Lord and respect the shepherds of the Church.

There must be a close relationship, communication and unity between shepherds and the shepherded. Saint Gregory the Theologian writes that the relationship between them must be analogous to the relationship of "soul to body or mind to soul", so that, as he writes later, "both are composed of each other, the deficient and the surplus", so that with the harmony of the Spirit their connection will "prove to be a complete body".

The gifted Christians who do not have any special mission in the Church, participate in all the sacred services, participate in all the Mysteries of the Church, especially in the Mystery of the Eucharist, and in various ways and degrees participate in the ecclesiastical culture and are led to the heavenly Divine Liturgy.

Some of them are chosen by the Bishops and finally by the Metropolitan to participate in the catechesis of the young, in the pastoral ministry, in the various activities of the Church and perform an important work in the Parishes and Metropolises.

If there were not these gifted lay people, the members of the Church, there could not be a Parish, there could not be Sacred Services and the Sacred Mysteries, nor could the pastoral, catechetical and philanthropic work of the Church be carried out, and for this we thank them warmly.

From all the written sermons that were given in the Sacred Temples during these two months (July and August) it can be concluded that the Church is an organized family, an ecclesiastical society, a Healing Center, and this was regulated by the God-bearing and God-inspired Fathers, who made decisions in Local and Ecumenical Synods, with the conviction and inspiration of the Holy Spirit. The Church is not a human established institution, but a "sacred institution" constituted by the Holy Spirit. In the Church, the sacred institution and the gift are closely connected.

To the Church belong the Bishops, the Presbyters, the Deacons, the Monks, the Parish Council, the Laity, all the blessed people of God. That is why our glory, our honor, is the Church. In it we must all remain humbly, as its members, to belong to it until we close our eyes and open them in eternity, in the heavenly Church. Amen. (*Translated by John Sanidopoulos*)

The True Nature of Fasting

[This material is taken from the introduction to <u>*The Lenten Triodion*</u> *published by St. Tikhon's Seminary Press – ed.]*

If we are to understand correctly the text of the Triodion and the spirituality that underlies it, there are five misconceptions about the Lenten fast against which we should guard. In the first place, the Lenten fast is not intended only for monks and nuns, but is *enjoined on the whole Christian people*. Nowhere do the Canons of the Ecumenical or Local Councils suggest that fasting is only for monks and not for the laity. By virtue of their Baptism, all Christians – whether married or under monastic vows – are Cross-bearers, following the same spiritual path. The exterior conditions in which they live out their Christianity display a wide variety, but in its inward essence the life is one. Just as the monk by his voluntary self-denial is seeking to affirm the intrinsic goodness and beauty of God's creation, so also is each married Christian required to be in some measure an ascetic. The way of negation and the way of affirmation are interdependent, and every Christian is called to follow both ways at once.

In the second place the Triodion *should not be misconstrued in a Pelagian sense*. If the Lenten texts are continually urging us to greater personal efforts, this should not be taken as implying that our progress depends solely upon the exertion of our own will. On the contrary, whatever we achieve in the Lenten fast is to be regarded as a free gift of grace from God. The Great Canon of St. Andrew of Crete leaves no doubt at all on this point: "I have no tears, no repentance, no compunction; / but as You are God, O Savior, bestow them on me." (*Canticle 2, Troparion 25*)

In the third place, our fasting *should not be self-willed but obedient*. When we fast, we should not try to invent special rules for ourselves, but we should follow as faithfully as possible the accepted pattern set before us by Holy Tradition. This accepted pattern, expressing as it does the collective conscience of the People of God, possesses a hidden wisdom and balance not to be found in ingenious austerities devised by our own fantasy. Where it seems that the traditional regulations are not applicable to our personal situation, we should seek the counsel of our spiritual father – not in order legalistically to secure a 'dispensation' from him, but in order humbly with his help to discover what is the will of God for us. Above all, if we desire for ourselves not some relaxation but some piece of additional strictness, we should not embark upon it without our spiritual father's blessing. Such has been the practice since the early centuries of the Church's life:

> Abba Antony said: 'I know of monks who fell after much labor and lapsed into madness, because they trusted in their own work and neglected the commandment that says: "Ask your father, and he will tell you."'(Deut. 32:7)

> Again he said: 'so far as possible, for every step that a monk takes, for every drop of water that he drinks in his cell, he should consult the *gerontes* (literally, 'old man' – ed.), in case he makes some mistake in this.'

These words apply not only to monks but also to lay people living in the 'world,' even though the latter may be bound by a less strict obedience to their spiritual father. If proud and willful, our fasting assumes a diabolical character, bringing us closer not to God but to Satan. Because fasting renders us sensitive to the realities of the spiritual world, it can be dangerously ambivalent: for there are evil spirits as well as good.

In the fourth place, paradoxical though it may seem, the period of Lent is a time *not of gloom but of joyfulness*. It is true that fasting brings us to repentance and to grief for sin, but this penitent grief, in the vivid phrase of St. John Climacus, is a 'joy-creating sorrow' (*The Ladder* Step 7). The Triodion deliberately mentions both tears and gladness in a single sentence: "Grant me tears falling as the rain from heaven, O Christ, As I keep this joyful day of the Fast." (Vespers for Monday of the first week) It is remarkable how frequently the themes of joy and light recur in the texts for the first day of Lent:

> With joy let us enter upon the beginning of the Fast. Let us not be of sad countenance. . .
>
> Let us joyfully begin the all-hallowed season of abstinence; And let us shine with the bright radiance of the holy commandments. . . .
>
> All mortal life is but one day, so it is said, to those who labor with love. There are forty days in the Fast: let us keep them all with joy. (*Matins for Monday of the first week*)

The season of Lent, it should be noted, falls not in midwinter when the countryside is frozen and dead, but in spring when all things are returning to life. The English word 'Lent' originally had the meaning 'springtime'; and in a text of fundamental importance the Triodion likewise describes the Great Fast as 'springtime':

> The springtime of the Fast has dawned, * The flower of repentance has begun to open. * O brethren, let us cleanse ourselves from all impurity * and sing to the Giver of Light: * Glory to You, Who alone love mankind. (*Vespers for Wednesday of Cheesefare Week*)

Lent signifies not winter but spring, not darkness but light, not death but renewed vitality. Certainly it has a somber aspect, with the repeated prostrations at the weekday services, with the dark vestments of the priest, with the hymns sung to a subdued chant, full of compunction. In the Christian empire of Byzantium theaters were closed and public spectacles forbidden during Lent; and even today weddings

are forbidden in the seven weeks of the Fast. Yet these elements of austerity should not blind us to the fact that the fast is not a burden, not a punishment, but a gift of God's grace: "Come, O people, and today let us accept the grace of the Fast as a gift from God." (Matins for Monday of the first week)

Fifthly and finally, our Lenten abstinence *does not imply a rejection of God's creation*. As St. Paul insists, "Nothing is unclean in itself" (Rom. 14:14). All that God has made is 'very good' (Gen. 1:31); to fast is not to deny this intrinsic goodness but to reaffirm it. 'To the pure all things are pure' (Titus 1:15), and so at the Messianic banquet in the Kingdom of heaven there will be no need for fasting and ascetic self-denial. But, living as we do in a fallen world, and suffering as we do from the consequences of sin, both original and personal, we are *not* pure; and so we have need of fasting. Evil resides not in created things as such but in our attitude towards them, that is, in our will. The purpose of fasting, then, is not to repudiate the divine creation but to cleanse our will. During the fast we deny our bodily impulses – for example, our spontaneous appetite for food and drink – not because these impulses are in themselves evil, but because they have been disordered by sin and require to be purified through self-discipline. In this way, asceticism is a fight not *against* but *for* the body; the aim of fasting is to purge the body from alien defilement and to render it spiritual. By rejecting what is sinful in our will, we do not destroy the God-created body but restore it to its true balance and freedom. In Father Sergei Bulgakov's phrase, we kill the flesh in order to acquire a body.

But in rendering the body spiritual, we do not thereby dematerialize it, depriving it of its character as a physical entity. The 'spiritual' is not to be equated with the non-material; neither is the 'fleshly' or carnal to be equated with the bodily. In St. Paul's usage, 'flesh' denotes the totality of man, soul and body together, insofar as he is fallen and separated from God; and in the same way 'spirit' denotes the totality of man, soul and body together, insofar as he is redeemed and divinized by grace. Thus the soul as well as the body can become carnal and fleshly, and the body as well as the soul can become spiritual. When St. Paul enumerates the 'works of the flesh' (Gal. 5:19-21), he includes such things as sedition, heresy and envy, which involve the soul much more than the body. In making our body spiritual, then, the Lenten fast does not suppress the physical aspect of our human nature, but makes our materiality once more as God intended it to be. Such is the way in which we interpret our abstinence from food.

Saint David of Wales

Saint David was the son of King Sant, a prince of Cardigan in far western Wales. All the information we have about him is based on the 11th century biography written by Rhygyfarch, the son of Bishop Sulien of St. David's.

David, who may have been born at Henfynw in Cardigan, lived during the golden age of Celtic Christianity when saints were plentiful, many of them of noble rank--kings, princes, and chieftain--who lived the monastic life, built oratories and churches, and preached the gospel.

Saint Cadoc founded the great Monastery of Llancarfan. Saint Illtyd turned from the life of a soldier to that of a mystic and established the Abbey of Llantwit, where tradition links his name to that of Sir Galahad. But greatest among them was David, cousin of Cadoc and pupil of Illtyd, who was educated in the White House of Carmarathen and who founded the Monastery of Menevia in the place that now bears his name.

According to his biography, David became a priest, studied under Saint Paulinus, the disciple of Saint Germanus of Auxerre, on an unidentified island for several years. He then engaged in missionary activities, founded twelve monasteries from Croyland to Pembrokeshire, the last of which, at Mynyw (Menevia) in southwestern Wales, was known for the extreme asceticism of its rule, which was based on that of the Egyptian Desert Fathers.

Here in this lovely and lonely outpost he gathered his followers. The Monastic Rule of David was strict, with but one daily meal of only bread with salt and herbs (eating meat and drinking beer were prohibited), frequent fasts, the drinking only of water, and hours of unbroken silence. Their days were filled with hard manual labor and no plough was permitted in the work of the fields. "Every man his own ox," said Saint David. The monks spent their evenings in prayer, reading and writing. No personal possessions were allowed: even to say "my book" was considered an offence. Nor did David exempt himself from the same rigorous discipline: he drank nothing but water and so came to be known as David the Waterman; and long after Vespers, when the last of his monks had retired to bed, he prayed on alone through the night.

We are told that he was of a lovable and happy disposition, and an attractive and persuasive preacher. It was perhaps his mother, the saintly Non, who had nurtured him carefully in the Christian faith, that he owed so many of his own fine qualities. It was not surprising, therefore, that when the time came for the appointment of a new Archbishop of Wales the choice fell upon him.

At Brevi, in Cardiganshire, a great synod had been convened about 550, attended by a thousand members, but David, who kept aloof from temporal concerns, remained in his retreat at Menevia. The synod, however, insisted on sending for him. So great was the crowd and so intense the excitement that the voice of the aged and retiring Holy Archbishop Dubricius could hardly be heard when he named David as his successor. David, who at first refused, came forward

reluctantly, but when he spoke his voice was like a silver trumpet, and all could hear and were deeply moved; and in that hour of his succession a white dove was seen to settle upon his shoulders as if it were a sign of God's grace and blessing.

It is said that David was consecrated Archbishop by the Patriarch of Jerusalem and given an altar stone by him while on pilgrimage to the Holy Land. But he loved Menevia and could not bring himself to leave it for Caerleon, the seat of the archbishopric, which he transferred to his own monastery by the wild headlands of the western sea, and which to this day is known by his name and remains a place of pilgrimage.

Again, although evidence is unreliable, David convened a synod, called the Synod of Victory, because it marked the final demise of Pelagianism, ratified the edicts of Brevi, and drew up regulations for the British Church.

Giraldus tells us that in his time congregations and monasteries grew all over Wales and "to these Father David, as if placed upon a lofty eminence was a mirror and pattern of life."

"He opened," we are told, "many fountains in dry places, and across the centuries his words spoken in the hour of death still reach us: 'Brothers and sisters, be joyful and keep your faith and do the little things.'"

On the last Sunday before his death after he had received Divine Communion he gave the people his blessing bidding them to be joyful and to keep the faith for they would see him no more in this world. He died on Tuesday the 1st of March and the monks cried out with anguish: "Who will help us? Who will pray for us? Who will be a father to us as David was?"

Saint David was buried in his cathedral and his tomb became, and still is, a great place of pilgrimage. Even the Norman Kings William the Conqueror and Henry II visited it to pay homage. Bishop Richard Carew rebuilt the Cathedral Church largely from offerings at the Shrine and the relics were translated to their present position to the north side of the presbytery in 1275.

His birth and death dates are uncertain, ranging from c. 454 to 520 for the former and from 560 to 601 for the latter....

Saint David's Cathedral lies in a hollow in the rugged Goewer peninsula called in Welsh Mynyw, transliterated into Latin as Menevia, the most western tip of Britain. The place is pure enchantment, the uneven floor of the great church seems to move with spiritual power and the little oaken casket containing the relics of David and Justinian, his confessor and "soul friend", would move the most skeptical. Every pilgrim should walk the mile or so up the narrow country lane to Saint Non's Well and Chapel, overlooking the rocky coastline with its small

islands, for this is reputed to be the birthplace of Dewi Sant or Saint David. (*from johnsanidopoulos.com*)

Venerable Mother Domnina of Syria

You bore a load of virtues Domnina, approaching God as a truly happy merchant.

Domnina was a female ascetic in the southern part of the region of Cyrus (Cyrrhus). She lived in a cell in a garden owned by her relatives, who fed her and funded her alms. She had especially close links with the local church: she attended morning and evening prayer each day. and the parish priest put up her many visitors. In all, she belonged to the tradition of pious virgins, livmg at home, who first feature in Syrian writing in the early third-century Pseudo-Clementine Epistles on Virginity.

By Bishop Theodoret of Cyrus, Syria

Emulating the life of the inspired Maron, whom we recalled above, the wonderful Domnina* set up a small hut in the garden of her mother's house; her hut is made of millet stalks. Passing the whole day there, she wets with incessant tears not only her cheeks but also her garments of hair, for such is the clothing with which she covers her body. Going at cockcrow to the divine shrine nearby, she offers hymnody to the Master of the universe, together with the rest, both men and women. This she does not only at the beginning of the day but also at its end, thinking the place consecrated to God to be more venerable than every other spot and teaching others so. Judging it, for this reason, worthy of every attention, she has persuaded her mother and brothers to spend their fortune on it.

As food she has lentils soaked in water; and she endures all this labor with a body reduced to a skeleton and half-dead - for her skin is very thin, and covers her thin bones as if with a film, while her fat and flesh have been worn away by labors. Though exposed to all who wish to see her, both men and women, she neither sees a face nor shows her face to another, but is literally covered up by her cloak and bent down onto her knees, while she speaks extremely softly and indistinctly, always making her remarks with tears. She has often taken my hand, and after placing it on her eyes, released it so soaked that my very hand dripped tears. What discourse could give due praise to a woman who with such wealth of philosophy weeps and wails and sighs like those living in extreme poverty? For it is fervent love for God that begets these tears, firing the mind to divine contemplation, stinging it with pricks and urging it on to migrate from here.

Though spending in this way both the day and the night, nor does she neglect the other forms of virtue, but ministers, as far as she can, to the heroic contestants, both those we have mentioned and those we have omitted. She also ministers to those who come to see her, bidding them stay with the shepherd of the village and

sending them all they need herself, for the property of her mother and brothers is available for her to spend, since it reaps a blessing through her. To myself too when I arrived at this place - it is to the south of our region - she sent rolls, fruit, and soaked lentils. (*from johnsanidopoulos.com*)

Also Commemorated Today

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

Martyr Eudocia of Heliopolis in Phoenicia (152?).
New Hieromartyr Olga (1937).
New Hieromartyrs Basil, Peter, John, Benjamin, Michael priests, New Hieromartyr Anthony, Virgin-martyrs Anna, Daria, Eudokia, Alexandra, Martyr Basil, Virgin-martyr Nadezhda (1938).
New Hieromartyr Alexander priest (1942).
New Hieromartyr Basil priest (1943).
New Hieromartyrs Abbess Antonina of Kizliar (1924), Methodius (1920) and Anastasia Andreyevna, fool-for-Christ.
Venerable Mother Zosima of Ennatsky (1935)
Venerable Martyrius, abbot of Zelenets (Tikhvin, Zelenetsk), w/w (1603).
Martyrs Nestor, Tribimius, Marcellus, and Anthony of Perge in Pamphylia (3rd c.).
Martyr Antonina of Nicaea in Bithynia (284-305).
Venerable Agapius of Vatopedi Skete of Kolitsou, Mt. Athos, & four companions.
Venerable Swidbert (Swithbert), monastic founder on the Rhine River (713).
St. Albinus (Aubin), bishop of Angers (550).
Venerable Synesios of Lysi in Cyprus
St. Leo-Luke, abbot of Corleone, Sicily (900).
New Martyr Paraskevas of Trebizond (1659).
Martyrs Sophronius and Silvester (Greek).
Martyrs Charisius, Nicephorus, and Agapius (Greek).
St. Marnoc (Marnock), Bishop of Annandale (c. 625)
Hieromartyr Monan, Archdeacon of St. Andrews (874)
St. Felix II, pope of Rome (492)
Hieromartyr Herculanus, bishop of Perugia (549)(Italy) (also Nov 7)
Martyr Adrian and companions of Numidia (c. 290)
Hieromartyr Leo, bishop of Rouen, apostle to the Basques (889)
Martyrs Leo, Donatus, Abundantius, Nicephorus and 9 others (?) (N. Africa)
Martyr Luperculus (Lupercus) of Tarbes (c. 300) (Gaul)
260 Martyrs of Rome (269)
St. Rudesind (Rosendo), Bishop of Mondoñedo and Compostella (977) (Spain)
St. Siviard, monk of Saint-Calais (729) (France)
St. Amant of Boixe, hermit (6th c.)

St. Abdalong, bishop of Marseille (737 or 739)
St. Albin, bishop of Kemper (Quimper) in Brittany (5th c.)
St. Albinus, bishop of Angers in Brittany (c. 554)
St. Albin, bishop of Embrun (630)
St. Baitan, Abbot of Clonmacnoise (663)
St. Denek, hermit of Vannes (6th c.)
Martyrs Adrien, Eunucule, Felix, Hermes, Januarius, & 19 others of Marseille (c. 290)
St.Joh, bishop of Nimes in Languedoc (550)
St. Mélarie (Mélaria), hermitess of Dirinon Leon in Brittany (6th c.)
St. Rémessaire (Rémézaire, Ramissarius, Remissarius), bishop of Nîmes in Languedoc (633)
St. Simples, confessor of Tours (7th c.)
St. Simplice (Plice), bishop of Bourges in Berry (480)

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, the newly reposed servant of God Robert Murray, and those in need of our prayers. (Please advise Fr. Seamus of changes.)