

SOBORNOST

St. Thomas the Apostle Orthodox Church

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

Rev. Father Joseph Edgington, Pastor
(703) 532-8017

fredgington@gmail.com
www.apostlethomas.org

American Carpatho-Russian Orthodox Diocese

*ECUMENICAL PATRIARCHATE
OF CONSTANTINOPLE*

SERVICES

**See last pages for additional services
this week**

Saturday: Confession 5:00 PM
Great Vespers 5:30 PM

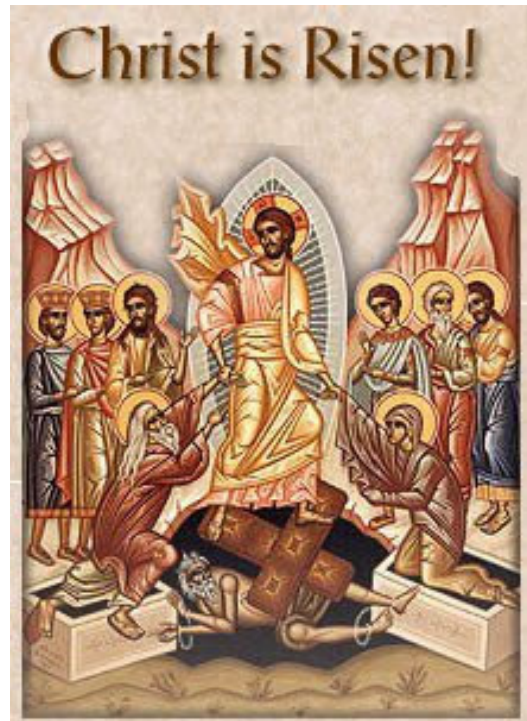
Sunday: Matins (Orthros) 8:45 AM
Divine Liturgy 10:00 AM.

April 16, 2017 – Holy Pascha | Christ Is Risen!

Christ is Risen! Truly He is Risen!

In four words is expressed the entire mystery of this (and the other) world, of every person, of the mystery of *my* being, and of the mystery of *your* being. If there were no Risen Lord, His Resurrection would not be; and if there were no Risen Lord, we would not be – there would be no Christian in the world.

How did the Lord Christ conquer this world? How did Christianity conquer this world? You know that in the beginning of Christianity the great and powerful Roman Empire persecuted Christians everywhere for 330 years. They did not defend themselves with guns and airplanes. No! They defended themselves through prayer and God's help. And for 330 years they turned wolves into sheep. Recall the Savior's words to His disciples: "Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves" (Matthew 10:16). A great miracle took place, brethren: the wolves were turned into sheep, and the wolves did not devour the sheep, did not tear up and destroy them. What is this? What is this power? This is that power about which you hear in the words of the Apostle Peter, when he says to Aeneas: "Arise," and he immediately rises (Acts 9:34); and when he says to Tabitha: "Arise," and she rises from the dead as from sleep (Acts 9:40). What is this, what happened to this world?



A great mystery has been explained, the mystery of this world and the mystery of man. What does the Resurrection of the Lord Christ demonstrate? It demonstrates that man is an eternal being. Death is defeated – that is what the Resurrection of the Lord Christ means. Eternal Life is provided for all human existence. It was for this that the Lord came to this world.

This world had been constantly under the power of terrible death. What is more terrible than death? Nothing! This entire planet, this holy land of God, had been a cemetery and tomb, an enormous tomb, and people were plucked into this tomb one after another. So the Lord Christ, through His Resurrection, showed us all that we people are eternal beings, that we are created for Eternal Life. Yes, for Eternal Life, and nothing less. "If Christ be not risen," says the Apostle Paul, "then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain" (1 Corinthians 15:14). What is Christ to us, if He has not conquered death? How then do we, Christians, differ from other people? Here, look: today, yesterday, and always throughout the history of the world there are continuously valiant men, heroes. But who are they, what are they? Mosquitoes.

Only the Lord Christ stands as the Conqueror of death and the Giver of life. In this lies His exceptional greatness. Our faith is faith in the Resurrection of the Lord Christ and in our own resurrection. Christ is risen, means that we are all risen! He is risen in order to give us Life Eternal, in order to ensure us victory over death, this only true victory in this world. All other victories are just mockeries. Millions of people perish – for what? Why do people perish today? Not for the reason for which they were created, not for Life Eternal, but for earthly, corruptible, simple, negligible things....

People reject the Lord Christ, they reject Life Eternal – for what? What is this world offering them? But we stand with the Apostle Paul for Eternal Truth: Christ is risen, so that we too would be risen (1 Corinthians 15:20-23). This is the foundational truth for us Christians. The Orthodox Church glorifies the Resurrection of the Lord Christ, His feast, not for a day or two, but for forty days – until the Ascension – continuously glorifying the Resurrection of the Lord Christ. And not only then: the Resurrection of the Lord Christ is glorified every Sunday; every Sunday, brethren, we remember the Resurrection of the Lord Christ. The Resurrection? It does not grow old in our soul. The power of the Lord Christ is poured out on us through His Holy Resurrection, through this infinite joy.

You hear from the Epistle of St. John the Theologian what he said about the Lord Christ: "that which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life ... we bear witness unto you" (1 John 1:1,2). This we bear witness unto you, the Lord Christ,

Who grants Eternal Life. We, like His disciples, have handled Him with our hands. Christianity, persecuted for almost two thousand years already, is created stronger than all earthly things. Many nightmares and storms will come, but the Church of Christ will remain and not perish. People perish, but not the Church! People perish, but not the Church! St. John the Theologian, a man who witnessed and witnesses with all his being and all his conviction that Christ is the God-man, says: if you want to possess Life Eternal, then believe in the Lord Christ, in His Resurrection, believe in what He has done (c.f., 1 John 5:5, 12-13).

Look at the Apostle Peter, how he resurrects people and performs miracles. Sheep turn wolves into sheep and lambs. St Basil of Ostrog today, too, performs miracles, as does St Prochorus of Pchinja and all the countless Serbian saints. How does this come about? From the Resurrection of the Lord Christ, from the Feast that is celebrated for forty days and on Sundays throughout the course of the entire year. This is what supports us Christians in this world. We laugh at our persecutors; we do not fear death, we are children of the Risen Lord, for He gave us the power and strength to defeat everything that separates us from God, that separates us from his Righteousness, His Truth, His Goodness.

May the Good Risen Lord confirm us through His Disciple, St. John; through the All-Holy Theotokos; and through all the saints, in this faith in the Resurrection of the Lord Christ, in our resurrection, in the fact that we are eternal beings. Our calling in this world is to manifest the Resurrection of the dead and the victory over death. This victory over death is experienced by every one of us when we live evangelically, when we strive in faith in the Lord, in love, and in prayer to fulfill our lives. All this, deeply engraved on our souls, will lead us to Life Eternal.

Christ is Risen! Truly He is Risen!

St. Justin Popovich

Today's Epistle Lesson – The Acts of the Apostles 1:1-8

The former account I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach, until the day in which He was taken up, after He through the Holy Spirit had given commandments to the apostles whom He had chosen, to whom He also presented Himself alive after His suffering by many infallible proofs, being seen by them during forty days and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God.

And being assembled together with *them*, He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the Promise of the Father, “which,” *He said*, “you have heard from Me; for John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.” Therefore, when they had come

together, they asked Him, saying, “Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?” And He said to them, “It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority. But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”

Today’s Gospel Lesson – Saint John 1:1-17

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.

There was a man sent from God, whose name *was* John. This man came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all through him might believe. He was not that Light, but *was sent* to bear witness of that Light. That was the true Light which gives light to every man coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him. He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him. But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. John bore witness of Him and cried out, saying, “This was He of whom I said, ‘He who comes after me is preferred before me, for He was before me.’” And of His fullness we have all received, and grace for grace. For the law was given through Moses, *but* grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.

A Word From the Holy Fathers

Oh, the awesome and great mystery! For it is fitting to begin our discourse with a miracle at a time of strange and wondrous things. Oh, the unutterable providence on our behalf of our Lord and Creator! Oh, unfathomable depth of judgments, and wealth of goodness, and founts of mercy flowing with copious streams, watering the whole world in an other-worldly manner, and gushing with an inexhaustible flow! Oh, the Lord's passion, burial and death that abolish passions, death and hell! Who is there that does not laud and glorify His sufferings, and is not amazed at them? Who is there that does not shudder and tremble and grow dizzy at the blows? Who is not filled with wonder and astonishment at the spitting, the scoffing, the jeering, the flagellation, on seeing intact feet pierced through, and

stainless hands being transfixed, and the side being wounded with a spear, and, wonder upon wonder, the body being stained red with blood from them, and that after death? Whose sufferings are these? Oh, the endurance and long-suffering of the Maker and Creator of everything, Who by a word alone governs the universe! Why does He suffer? So that He may bestow freedom from passions to the human race, at whose hands he undergoes this passion and mockery; so that He may free us, at whose hands He is scourged, crucified and wounded, from our scourges and wounds, us, whose nature, after being abducted and enslaved by our transgression of the commandment, has been cruelly tormented by our passions; so that He may mold again in His image that which we have defaced and clouded over with the iniquity of our deeds, and may restore to us our ancient nobility.

For this reason He is crucified, and dies and is buried, so that, having snatched humankind away from the Serpent's domination, and drawn it up from the pits of death, He may raise it up along with Himself, and make it worthy again of its portion in paradise, from which it had been banished for willful wrong-doing.

...let us wipe off that incurable disease, and make our conscience pure of every sin, having sprinkled ourselves with hyssop, and cleansed it by means of repentance, and made it wholly pure; and let us draw near to the body of Christ our Lord... not begging it from Pilate through Joseph, but as it is mercifully granted now to all the faithful, Who cries out saying, "Take, eat, this is my body which is broken for you for the remission of sins, for you on whose behalf I became flesh, and on whose behalf I am crucified, on whose behalf even now I am sacrificed every day on the mystical table, so that, being deemed worthy of the sacrifice, you may become sharers of my body and partners of my glory, you on whose behalf I have dwelt in a tomb, and the brazen gates have been broken, and the locks and iron bars have been shattered, and the empire which dominated you has been destroyed.

For the Lord was covered with a tomb, but to us He holds out immortality; His face was wrapped with a napkin, but He clothes those who have believed in Him with the garment of incorruptibility; He [was] enveloped in funeral swathing bands, but severs the tangled chains of our sin; He became a fellow-dweller of the dead, but He prepares the heavenly tabernacles for the complement of those who arise from the dead; He was covered with a tomb, and the might of Hell is despoiled, the pricks of death are broken, and the choir of the dead as it rises up cries out with us in a loud voice, "O death, where is your sting? O Hell, where is your victory?" For truly, when Christ became flesh, death was swallowed up in victory.

O tomb, who are the emptying of the tombs of ages and the filling up of the heavenly tabernacles! O tomb, out of which the death of our sin has sprouted up,

and the joy of the deliverance has bloomed! O tomb, in which the condemnation of our transgressions lies buried, and the plea of salvation has been brought forth, whereby we have been delivered from the wrinkles of corruption, and have adorned ourselves with the hope of incorruption, in which the mortal part of our nature has wasted away, and the dignity of immortality has been re-created! O tomb, through which the might of the demons has fallen, and the horn of men has been raised, through which the impious belief of the pagans has been made dead, and the holy veneration of the faithful has been strengthened! O tomb, jeered at by the Jews yet attended by angels, guarded by a watch of soldiers yet worshiped by the whole creation!

But You Who have dwelt for us in a tomb, and become numbered among the dead, and have of Yourself wrought for us our resurrection, Christ our God, may You ...lead Your flock to life-giving and spiritual fields, driving it away, as from a deadly pollution, from the heretical and schismatic pasture, through which the prison of the Serpent, instigator of evil, stealthily creeps in; but gathering everyone into Your flock and fold, make us worthy of Your kingdom; for we all take refuge with You, and on You we have pinned all our hopes, and to You we send up our worship and praise, together with the eternal Father and the co-eternal and life-giving Spirit, now and forever and ever. Amen.

– St. Photius the Great, Patriarch of Constantinople, *12.1,2,7-9*

On Stewardship and the Orthodox Life – Part 124:

The Best Thanksgiving is Giving



“If you can keep your head when all about you are losing theirs...” – Rudyard Kipling

Fr. Robert Holet in his book, *The First and Finest*, states that “Stewardship is a response to God in thanksgiving.” We hear the aphorism “it is better to give than to receive.” Research has shown that people that practice giving, are reported to have greater health, more happiness and joy and less feeling of stress. Another recent study indicated that giving a meaningful gift to one in need provides much more satisfaction than giving to masses. Mother Theresa once said, “If I look at the mass, I will never act. If I look at an individual, I will.”

Archpriest George Morelli, Chairman of the Antiochian Archdiocese Department of Chaplain and Pastoral Counseling, in one of his many articles, tells us that “The Christian theology of giving is profound.” It is the imitation of God. God gives

continually and equally to all according to their needs. Are we not to imitate God? Are we not to give to others in need, in love and thanksgiving for what God has given us? “The lesson for giving is for us to see God in individual persons,” Morelli tells us.

Archimandrite Zacharias in his book, *Remember Thy First Love*, tells us that the Fathers of the fourth century, a time when the Church blossomed greatly, states that Christians in the last times will neither have strength to endure ascetic hardship nor be able to perform the godly works of the fathers of old but those “who succeeded simply in keeping the faith would be more glorified in heaven than those Fathers who worked miracles and even raised the dead to life.”

As the Archimandrite states, “We see that God judges us with respect to the generation in which we live.” Let our generation be the one that preserves and expounds the faith of our Fathers when all around us exhibits apostasy. Let us use our gifts that God has given us to preserve the fullness of our faith that our Fathers have given us.

Part 125: Have We Discovered Our Gifts?

“But each has his own special gift from God, one of one kind and one of another.”
(1 Corinthians 7:7 RSV)

We have talked a lot about the gifts God has given us. Have we unwrapped those gifts? I recently heard a sermon where the priest made the analogy of the gifts God gives us with those that may have been received at a wedding shower or marriage or some other celebration and forgot to open them until years later when they were discovered in the basement, still in the original wrapping. We say, “OH, that is where that has been!”

Do we do the same with the gifts that God has given us? Do we forget to unwrap them and wonder why God has forsaken us? I would submit that many of us are afraid to unwrap the gifts He has given us because we would then be committed to God, to do His will. Many of us do not want to do that, do we? We want to live our secular lives with all the luxuries that it brings and profess our religious life for two hours on Sunday or a feast day.

The gifts that God has so generously given to us is not for living in luxury. The gifts are to provide for the necessities of life and to use the excess to help those less fortunate. That means making a commitment to God! Isn't that what Orthodoxy is all about? I would challenge anybody to show me in Scripture or the writings of

the Holy Fathers where it says, “Use all that God gives you to live in luxury and let the less fortunate worry about themselves!”

If you haven’t discovered the gifts that God has given you to help others, dig deep into the basement of your soul. There you will find those gifts and say, “OH, that is where you have been! (*from acrod.org*)

UPCOMING DIOCESAN EVENTS

The Altar Boy Retreat (ABR) and the Young Women's Encounter (YWE) are scheduled for 25-29 June. The ABR is open to our Altar Boys ages 8-18 and the YWE is open to the young ladies of the parish ages 13-18. More information will be coming out on those events in the near future.

The 40th Anniversary Alumni Day will be held at Camp Nazareth on Saturday, May 20, 2017. Family Day will be held at Camp Nazareth on Sunday, June 11, 2017. Keep an eye out for further details in future bulletins, or navigate your way to www.campnazareth.org.

CAMP NAZARETH

Camp Nazareth is eagerly awaiting and preparing for the arrival of the Summer Camping Season, and registration is now open. Apostle Thomas campers will be attending Week 2, July 23-29, 2017. May 15th is the deadline for clergy and volunteer applications, and is the last day for registrants to receive the \$20 early bird discount. For more information, please visit the Camp website.

REGISTRATION FOR CAMP WILL ONLY BE ABLE TO BE DONE ONLINE THROUGH THE CAMP’S WEBSITE – CAMPNAZARETH.ORG.

COMMEMORATED TODAY: VIRGIN-MARTYRS AGAPE, IRENE & CHIONIA

The Holy Martyrs Agape, Irene, and Chionia were sisters who lived at the end of the third century to the beginning of the fourth century, near the Italian city of Aquilea. They were left orphaned at an early age.

The young women led a pious Christian life and they turned down many offers of marriage. Their spiritual guide was the priest Xeno. It was revealed to him in a vision that he would die very soon, and that the holy virgins would suffer martyrdom. Also at Aquilea and having a similar vision was the Great Martyr Anastasia (December 22), who is called “Deliverer from Potions,” because she fearlessly visited Christians in prison, encouraging them and healing them from potions, poisons, and other harmful things. The Great Martyr Anastasia visited to the sisters and urged them to endure all things for Christ. Soon what was predicted



in the vision came to pass. The priest Zeno died, and the three virgins were arrested and brought to trial before the emperor Diocletian (284-305).

Saint Chionia (“snow” in Greek) preserved the purity of her baptism according to the words of the Prophet-King David, “You will wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow” (Ps. 50/51:7).

Saint Irene (“peace” in Greek) preserved the peace of Christ within herself and manifested it to others, according to the Savior’s word, “My peace I give you” (John 14:27).

Saint Agape (“love” in Greek) loved God with all her heart, and her neighbor as herself (Mt.22:37-39).

Seeing the youthful beauty of the sisters, the emperor urged them to deny Christ and he promised to find them illustrious bridegrooms from his entourage. The holy sisters replied that their only Bridegroom was Christ, for Whom they were ready to suffer. The emperor demanded they renounce Christ, but neither the elder sisters, nor the youngest, would consent. They called the pagan gods mere idols made by human hands, and they preached faith in the true God.

By order of Diocletian, who was leaving for Macedonia, the holy sisters were also to be brought there. And they brought them to the court of the governor Dulcitus.

When he saw the beauty of the holy martyrs, he was aroused with impure passion. He put the sisters under guard, and he told them that they would receive their freedom if they agreed to fulfill his desires. But the holy martyrs replied that they were prepared to die for their Heavenly Bridegroom, Christ.

Then Dulcitus decided to have his way by force. When the holy sisters arose at night to glorify the Lord in prayer, Dulcitus came to the door and tried to enter, but an invisible force prevented him. He staggered about, unable to find his way out. Then he fell down in the kitchen among the cooking utensils, the pots and pans, and he was covered all over with soot. The servants and the soldiers recognized him only with difficulty. When he saw himself in a mirror, he then realized that the holy martyrs had made a fool of him, and he decided to take his revenge on them.

At his court, Dulcitus gave orders to strip the holy martyrs. But the soldiers were not able to do this, no matter how much they tried. Their clothing seemed to be stuck to the bodies of the holy virgins. During the trial Dulcitus suddenly fell asleep, and no one could rouse him. Just as they carried him into his house, he immediately awoke. When they reported everything that had happened to the emperor Diocletian, he became angry with Dulcitus and he gave the holy virgins over to Sisinius for trial. He began with the youngest sister, Irene. Seeing that she remained unyielding, he sent her to prison and then attempted to sway Saints Chionia and Agape. He also failed to make them renounce Christ, and Sisinius ordered that Saints Agape and Chionia be burned. On hearing the sentence, the sisters gave thanks to the Lord for their crowns of martyrdom. In the fire, Agape and Chionia surrendered their pure souls to the Lord.

When the fire went out, everyone saw that the bodies of the holy martyrs and their clothing had not been scorched by the fire, and their faces were beautiful and peaceful, as if they were asleep. On the day following, Sisinius gave orders to bring Saint Irene to court. He threatened her with the fate of her older sisters and he urged her to renounce Christ. Then he threatened to hand her over for defilement in a brothel. But the holy martyr answered, “Even if my body is defiled by force, my soul will never be defiled by renouncing Christ.”

When the soldiers of Sisinius led Saint Irene to the brothel, two luminous soldiers overtook them and said, “Your master Sisinius commands you to take this virgin to a high mountain and leave her there, and then return to him and report to him that you have fulfilled his command.” And the soldiers did so. When they reported back to Sisinius, he flew into a rage, since he had given no such orders. The luminous soldiers were angels of God, saving the holy martyr from defilement. Sisinius went to the mountain with a detachment of soldiers and saw Saint Irene on the summit. For a long while they searched for the way to the top, but they could not find it. Then one of the soldiers wounded Saint Irene with an arrow. The martyr cried out to Sisinius, “I mock your impotent malice, and I go my Lord Jesus Christ pure and undefiled.” Having given thanks to the Lord, she lay down upon the ground and surrendered her soul to God on the very day of Holy Pascha (+ 304).

The Great Martyr Anastasia heard about the end of the holy sisters, and she buried their bodies with reverence. *(from oca.org)*





Office of the Bishop
312 Garfield Street
Johnstown, PA 15906

Protocol No. 6/2017

PASCHA ARCHPASTORAL LETTER

To the Very Reverend Protopresbyters, Very Reverend and Reverend Fathers, and Faithful of our God-Protected Diocese:

CHRIST IS RISEN!

INDEED HE IS RISEN!

“...its truth is seen in Him and you, because the darkness is passing and the true light is already shining.” (1 John 2:8)

In this world where darkness unceasingly prowls and is ever ready to overtake and consume any goodness which may exist, we must remain steadfast in our faith and allow Christ’s Light to shine through us, transforming us into beacons of hope for the entire world.

During the beautiful service of the Resurrection, waiting in a darkened church, anticipating the Light, we should be mindful of what we are about to experience and its significance. The Resurrection is a real event. It is happening right now for all of us.

On this great and glorious Feast of Pascha – the Resurrection of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, our hearts are filled with tremendous joy, our souls are transformed and we bask in the Light of the Truth.

It is my fervent prayer that we continue and increase our efforts to help conquer the seemingly overwhelming sorrows and despairs in this darkened world by sharing the “Good News” of our Lord’s Resurrection, not only with the proclamation of “Christ is Risen” but also by also being the shining, radiant beacons of our Lord’s Light and Love.

Personal Greetings

On this Bright and Holy Feast, I extend my prayerful best wishes to you, the Clergy and Laity, Friends and Supporters of the American Carpatho-Russian Orthodox Diocese. May you truly experience the love, joy, and excitement of the early followers of Christ when they first saw Him after His Resurrection. Christ is Risen!

Working in the Risen Lord's Vineyard with much love,

+ Bishop Gregory

+Bishop Gregory of Nyssa

To be read as the sermon in all churches of the Diocese at the Divine Liturgy on the Feast of the Resurrection of our Lord, God, and Saviour Jesus Christ!



PATRIARCHAL ENCYCLICAL FOR HOLY PASCHA 2017

Prot. No. 315

+ B A R T H O L O M E W

By God's Mercy

Archbishop of Constantinople-New Rome and Ecumenical Patriarch

To the Plenitude of the Church: May the Grace, Peace and Mercy of the Christ Risen in Glory be with you All

Beloved brothers and sisters, children in the risen Lord,

"In the world you shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world" (John 16.33) is the reassurance of the Lord, who alone trampled upon death by death, to generations of men and women. "Christ is Risen!" is the cry that we, too, pronounce to all people far and wide from this Sacred See, which has experienced worldly crucifixion and tribulation; but it is also the See of resurrection inasmuch as it is from this corner of the planet, the City of Constantine, that we proclaim "the victory of life" that dispels every form of corruption and death itself.

During his earthly presence, the Lord frequently warned His disciples about the tribulation that would result from his sacrifice on the cross at Golgotha but also because of their ministry and life in this world – both their own as well as all those who believe in Christ. However, he also added a very significant detail: "You will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice; you will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will turn into joy . . . So you have sorrow now, but I will see you again and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy from you." (John 16.20-22)

This paschal and spiritual joy was first experienced by the Myrrh-bearing women, who came to the tomb of the life-giving Christ, with the Lord's greeting in a single word: "Rejoice!" (Matt. 28.9) The same paschal joy is emphatically professed by the Mother Church of Constantinople today: "This is the day of the Lord; let us rejoice and be glad in it." (Psalm 117.24) The final enemy, death, sorrow, our problems, corruption, tribulation, and trials: all of these are crushed and abolished by the victorious divine-human Lord.

However, we live in a world where the mass media of communication constantly transmit misfortunate news about terrorist attacks, local wars, destructive natural phenomena, problems of religious fanaticism, hunger, the refugee crisis, incurable diseases, poverty, psychological pressure, feelings of insecurity and other similarly undesirable conditions.

In the face of these daily "crosses," which human beings endure with reluctance, our holy mother Orthodox Church comes to remind us that, as Christians, we can

be glad because our leader Christ has proved victorious over them as the bearer of joy, who brings gladness to the whole universe.

Our joy is based on the conviction of Christ's victory. We are completely assured that good has conquered all things, that Christ came to the world "and left us in order to be victorious." (Rev. 6.2) The world that we shall eternally inhabit is Christ, who is light, truth, life, joy and peace.

Despite its daily crosses and sorrows, the great Mother Church of Christ exclusively and solely experiences this phenomenon of joy. It experiences – from and within this life – the heavenly kingdom. From this sacred center of Orthodoxy, from the bosom of this martyric Phanar, "on this effulgent night," we proclaim that the extension and purpose of the cross and all tribulation, the resolution of all human pain and suffering, is the Lord's reassurance: "I will not leave you as orphans." (John 14.18-19) "Behold, I am with you all the days of your life, to the end of the ages." (Matt. 28.20) This is the message that all of us should hear, that the contemporary world should hear in order to surrender to and discern Christ on the road to Emmaus. Indeed, Christ is beside us. And we shall see Him only if we hear and experience His word in our life.

This message – of the victory of life over death, of the triumph of the joyful light of the paschal candle over the darkness of disorder and dissolution – is announced to the whole world from the Ecumenical Patriarchate with the invitation to experience the unwaning light of the resurrection. We invite you all to stand with faith and hope before the risen Christ and before the mystery of life. We invite all of you to trust the risen Lord, the master of joy and delight, who holds the reigns of the entire creation.

Christ is risen, then, brothers and sisters! May the grace and boundless mercy of the lord of life and master over death be with you all.

Phanar, Holy Pascha 2017

+Bartholomew of Constantinople

Your fervent supplicant to the risen Christ

~ BRIGHT WEEK SERVICE SCHEDULE ~

- ❖ Schedule of services for the coming week (**please carefully note the times**):
 - On Bright Monday, we will celebrate a Divine Liturgy at **6:00 AM**.
 - On Bright Tuesday, we will celebrate a Divine Liturgy at **6:00 AM**.

Follow Our Diocese On-Line

Diocesan Website: <http://www.acrod.org>

Camp Nazareth: <http://www.campnazareth.org>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/acroddiocese>

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In Your Prayers – Please Remember... His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch BARTHOLOMEW, His Grace Bishop GREGORY, Fr. Joseph & Family, Greek Orthodox Archbishop Paul Yazigi of Aleppo, Syriac Orthodox Archbishop Yohanna Ibrahim of Aleppo, His Grace Bishop Neofitos of Nyeri and Mt. Kenya, Fr. John & Pani Betty Jean Baranik, Fr. Vincent Saverino, Presbyteria Katie Baker and family, Alicia Barosio and family, Jeffrey Carey, Tatyana and Slava Chumak & family, Xenia Chilkowich, Jon Church, Ramius Connour, Curtis Cooper, Luke Cooper, Tina Crull, Ron Dominiecki, Linda A. Georgiev, Heather Himler, John Homick, Cameron Houk, Helen Janowiak, John M. Janowiak, Deanna Jarrett, Tucker Karl and family, Robert Karpin, Andrew Kinn, Kopan family, Brian, Helen, and Luke Mahony, Valentina Makowelski, Susan Matula, Kristen McNeil, Anna Meinhold, Dn. Henry Middleton, David & Kathryn Newman, Bobby Nutter & Family, Henry & Lisa Osborne, Westin Perry & Parents, John Reece, Mary Reed, Chris & Kaitlin Rixey, Jerry Von Ronne, Anne Rosario, James, Theodore and Christina Ristas, Samson Family, Sharon Sheptak, Dawn & Faith Ulmschneider, Lydia Vita, Christine, Marshall, Nathaniel, Subdcn. Nectarios and Ia, the Syrian Christians displaced by war, Mother Virginia Marie and the Carmelite Nuns of Port Tobacco, the newly reposed servants of God Steve Stephanadis and Alexi Makowelski, and all those in need of our prayers. (Please advise Fr. Joseph of changes.)