

SOBORNOST

St. Thomas the Apostle Orthodox Church

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American Carpatho-Russian Orthodox Diocese

*ECUMENICAL PATRIARCHATE
OF CONSTANTINOPLE*

SERVICES

Wed: Moleben to the Theotokos 6:00 AM

Friday: Moleben to the Cross 6:00 AM

Saturday: Confession 5:00 PM

Great Vespers 5:30 PM

Sunday: Matins (Orthros) 8:45 AM

Children's Sunday School 9:30 AM

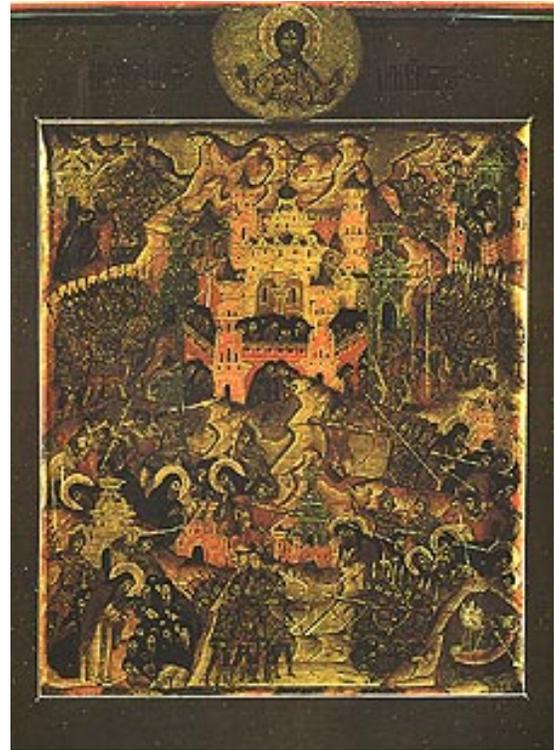
Divine Liturgy 10:00 AM.

January 14, 2018 – Apodosis of Theophany | Holy Fathers Slain at Sinai and Raithu

The Leavetaking of the Feast of Theophany takes place on January 14. The entire office of the Feast is repeated except for the Entrance, festal readings, Litya, Blessing of Loaves at Vespers, and the Polyeleos and festal Gospel at Matins. The festal Antiphons are not sung at Liturgy, and the Epistle and Gospel of the day are read.

There were two occasions when the monks and hermits were murdered by the barbarians. The first took place in the fourth century when forty Fathers were killed at Mt. Sinai, and thirty-nine were slain at Raithu on the same day.

Mount Sinai, where the Ten Commandments had been given to Moses, was also the site of another miracle. Ammonios, an Egyptian monk, witnessed the murder of the forty holy Fathers at Sinai. He tells of how the Saracens attacked the monastery and would have killed them all, if God had not intervened. A fire appeared on the summit of the peak, and the whole mountain smoked. The barbarians were terrified, and fled, while the surviving monks thanked God for sparing them. That day, the Blemmyes (an Arab tribe) killed thirty-nine Fathers at



Raithu (on the shores of the Red Sea). Igumen Paul of Raithu exhorted his monks to endure their suffering with courage and a pure heart.

The second massacres occurred nearly a hundred years later, and was also recorded by an eyewitness who miraculously escaped: Saint Nilus the Faster (November 12). The Arabs permitted some of the monks run for their lives. They crossed the valley and climbed up a mountain. From this vantage point, they saw the bedouin kill the monks and ransack their cells.

The Sinai and Raithu ascetics lived a particularly strict life: they spent the whole week at prayer in their cells. On Saturday they gathered for the all-night Vigil, and on Sunday they received the Holy Mysteries. Their only food was dates and water. Many of the ascetics of the desert were glorified by the gift of wonderworking: the Elders Moses, Joseph and others. Mentioned in the service to these monastic Fathers are: Isaiah, Sava, Moses and his disciple Moses, Jeremiah, Paul, Adam, Sergius, Domnus, Proclus, Hypatius, Isaac, Macarius, Mark, Benjamin, Eusebius and Elias. [We have relics from these saints embedded in our altar – Ed.] (*from oca.org*)

Today's Epistle Lesson – St. Paul's First Letter to Timothy 1:15-17

My son Timothy, this *is* a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief. However, for this reason I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show all longsuffering, as a pattern to those who are going to believe on Him for everlasting life. Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, to God who alone is wise, *be* honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.

Today's Gospel Lesson – Saint Luke 18:35-43

At that time, as Jesus was coming near Jericho, a certain blind man sat by the road begging. And hearing a multitude passing by, he asked what it meant. So they told him that Jesus of Nazareth was passing by. And he cried out, saying, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" Then those who went before warned him that he should be quiet; but he cried out all the more, "Son of David, have mercy on me!" So Jesus stood still and commanded him to be brought to Him. And when he had come near, He asked him, saying, "What do you want Me to do for you?" He said, "Lord, that I may receive my sight." Then Jesus said to him, "Receive your sight; your faith has made you well." And immediately he received his sight, and followed Him, glorifying God. And all the people, when they saw *it*, gave praise to God.



A Word From the Holy Fathers

Of the beliefs and practices whether generally accepted or publicly enjoined which are preserved in the Church some we possess derived from written teaching others we have received delivered to us “in a mystery” by the tradition of the apostles; and both of these in relation to true religion have the same force.

And these no one will gainsay;—no one, at all events, who is even moderately versed in the institutions of the Church. For were we to attempt to reject such customs as have no written authority, on the ground that the importance they possess is small, we should unintentionally injure the Gospel in its very vitals; or, rather, should make our public definition a mere phrase and nothing more.

For instance, to take the first and most general example, who is thence who has taught us in writing to sign with the sign of the cross those who have trusted in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ? What writing has taught us to turn to the East at the prayer? Which of the saints has left us in writing the words of the invocation at the displaying of the bread of the Eucharist and the cup of blessing? For we are not, as is well known, content with what the apostle or the Gospel has recorded, but both in preface and conclusion we add other words as being of great importance to the validity of the ministry, and these we derive from unwritten teaching.

Moreover we bless the water of baptism and the oil of the chrism, and besides this the catechumen who is being baptized. On what written authority do we do this? Is not our authority silent and mystical tradition? Nay, by what written word is the anointing of oil itself taught? And whence comes the custom of baptizing thrice? And as to the other customs of baptism from what Scripture do we derive the renunciation of Satan and his angels? Does not this come from that unpublished and secret teaching which our fathers guarded in a silence out of the reach of curious meddling and inquisitive investigation?

Well had they learnt the lesson that the awful dignity of the mysteries is best preserved by silence. What the uninitiated are not even allowed to look at was hardly likely to be publicly paraded about in written documents.

– St. Basil the Great

December Treasurer’s Report

Glory to Jesus Christ! For the month of December 2017:

Our income: \$14,102 | Our expenses: \$13,538.45 | Our income over expenses: \$563.55

This month our additional expenses were the replacement of the hot water heater and the dishwasher. We also had five Sunday collections. Thank you for being good stewards of God’s house. Kari David, Treasurer

Individual Assessments for 2018

Dear Fellow Parishioners,

Thanks be to God, we have reached the New Year, and with that comes our responsibility to be good stewards of all that He has entrusted to us; our environment, our parish and our Diocese.

To support our Diocese, each individual age eighteen and older (except for high school and undergraduate college students) is asked to contribute \$70.00 in 2018.

We (St Thomas Parish) have paid the 2018 assessments in full for each parishioner when we received the bill from the Diocese. We trust that each person in turn will re-pay us during the year. Your assessments are used to support the following basic needs of our Diocese:

- Our Diocesan Bishop Gregory whose Ordination and teachings are directly traceable to our Lord's Apostles. Without our Bishop, we cannot exist as a parish of the Holy Orthodox Church!

- The General Administration of our Diocese.

- Christ the Savior Seminary for the formation of the future Priests of our Diocese.

- The Church Messenger - the production and distribution of our monthly Diocesan Newspaper (If you are not receiving the Messenger, please let us know).

- The Mission Fund, which assists in the establishment and support of new mission parishes (We at St. Thomas have been the beneficiaries of this fund in the form of a generous interest-free loan toward the construction of our new church building).

- The maintenance of our Diocesan Cathedral church in Johnstown, PA, the home parish of our Diocesan Bishop and Chancellor.

If you are unsure whether your 2017 Assessment has been paid in full, please see or call Dana Dewey, Trustee, at (301) 481-3445.

Thank you in advance for your timely and generous support of our God-saved Diocese.

Yours in Christ,

Kari David, Treasurer

Dana Dewey, Trustee

Also commemorated today: Heiromartyr Platon, Bishop of Tallinn

The future Bishop of Estonia, Paul Kulbusch, was born on July 13, 1869 in Pootsi, Pärnu County, Estonia, where his father was the cantor of the local Orthodox parish. He studied at the Arusaare Orthodox parish school, and then at the Theological School and Seminary at Riga. Every year the two best graduates were

granted places to study, free of charge, at the Theological Academy in Saint Petersburg, and one of those chosen to receive such a scholarship was Bishop Platon. He graduated from the Academy in 1894. Archpriest Paul Kulbusch worked in Saint Petersburg for 23 years (1894-1917), and he founded there the Brotherhood of the Martyr Isidore.

In July 1917 the delegates of the Orthodox parishes in Estonia traveled to Saint Petersburg in order to approach Archpriest Paul Kulbusch and to ask for his consent to be consecrated as Bishop of Estonia. He had in fact already been offered an Episcopal see in Russia but had refused, because he felt that his vocation was, first of all, to serve his own people - the Estonian Orthodox.

The First World War had at that point lasted for over three years, and it was even uncertain how the Bishop was to be housed in Tallinn. However, Archpriest Paul Kulbusch consented and the ceremony of his nomination as Bishop was performed in the Cathedral of the Transfiguration of Christ in Tallinn. Benjamin, Metropolitan of Saint Petersburg, and Artemi, Bishop of Luuga, performed his consecration as Bishop in the Alexander Cathedral in Tallinn on December 31, 1917.

Less than two months after the consecration the German troops occupied Estonia. Traveling was not a simple enterprise at that time, but it did not prevent the Bishop from visiting, during a single summer, almost all the Orthodox parishes in Estonia. Before Christmas the Bishop intended to visit Riga in order to try to contribute to the settlement of certain ecclesiastical matters there. On his way the Bishop fell ill and he stayed in Tartu. The doctors diagnosed pneumonia. After receiving Holy Communion, however, the Bishop recovered.

On Sunday December 21, 1918 a red flag was hoisted above the Town Hall. Estonia was engulfed by the masses of the Red Army, which advanced over Narva to Tartu. The people in Tartu intended, however, to celebrate the feast of Christmas, the Birth of Christ, as usual. They were not frightened by rumors that the Bolsheviks intended to throw hand grenades among the people in the churches. On December 29 all divine services and any performance of ritual acts were prohibited under threat of the death penalty. Under these circumstances the Orthodox, Protestant, Roman and Jewish clergy decided to proceed united. This initiative was taken by Pastor D. Traugott Hahn, Professor of Theology at the University of Tartu (Dorpat).

On the evening of January 2 Bishop Platon was arrested in a street in Tartu (Dorpat) together with his protodeacon Dorin, a few yards from his home. A guard of 30 armed men took them to the headquarters of the militia. So began the imprisonment of Bishop Platon, which lasted 12 days. During his imprisonment Bishop Platon comforted and encouraged all the other prisoners. The Bishop

placed his panagia under his shirt so that he might be recognized, should he be shot.

During his imprisonment Bishop Platon often read from the Greek Gospel, especially from chapter 24 of St. Matthew. Half an hour before his death the Bishop, together with pastor Hahn, read the passion of Christ in St. Mark, chapter 15. On January 14, 1919, at about 10 o'clock in the morning a commissar with two Red Guards summoned Bishop Platon to come out. During a previous examination at night the commissar had insisted that the Bishop should cease to preach the Gospel. To this Bishop Platon answered, "As soon I am set free, I shall praise God." After some time the prisoners heard gunshots from the cellar.

At that very time, after hard fighting, the Estonian troops reached the center of Tartu. The doors in the prison were smashed in pieces with an axe, and the soldiers shouted, "You are free." The joy of liberation was changed to horror when they discovered in the cellar the bodies of those who had fallen victim to the commissars and the Red Guards.

The medical and forensic examination established that Bishop Platon had been stabbed with a bayonet: seven wounds inflicted from this weapon were found in his chest. Bullets had been shot into his chest, also one through the left shoulder and one through the right eye. The back part of his skull had been beaten in. It was evident that the Bishop had been tortured before he was put to death.

The Estonian Government ordered that the body of Bishop Platon should be transported to the capital city of Tallinn where a state funeral took place. The tomb of Bishop Platon still remains there in the Cathedral of the Transfiguration. For all Orthodox Estonians it is a holy place.

Bishop Platon and the two murdered priests, Michael Bleive and Nikolai Bezhnitsky, were canonized as martyrs by the Russian Orthodox Church in exile in 1982 and by the Patriarchate of Constantinople in 2000. (*abridged from johnsanidopoulos.com*)

Feast of the Holy Family of St. Basil the Great

On September 4th, 1998 the Holy Synod of the Church of Greece established the Feast of the Holy Family of Saint Basil the Great to promote and bless the sacred institution of the family. The celebration for this feast was established for the second Sunday of January. Few entire families have been officially celebrated by the Church through the centuries. Of the ancients, two families that quickly come to mind are those of Gregory the Theologian and Basil the Great. These families, beginning with the parents, created an atmosphere in the home that was spiritually healthy, for it was an atmosphere of love for God coupled with love for virtue, philanthropy and hospitality.



Basil was born about 330 at Caesarea in Cappadocia and reposed in 379. He came from a wealthy and pious family, including his father Saint Basil the Elder (+ 349), his mother Saint Emmelia (+ 375), his grandmother Saint Macrina the Elder (260-340), his sister Saint Macrina the Younger (c.330–379) and his brothers Saints Gregory of Nyssa (334-394), Naukratios of Mount Nitria (332-358), and Peter of Sebaste (345/7-392). It is also a widely held tradition that Saint Theosevia (c. 335-c.385) was his youngest sister (though

some claim she was the spouse of Saint Gregory of Nyssa), who is also a saint in the Church. There are also about four or five other girls, unknown sisters of St. Basil, who flourished in the married life, and the unknown grandfather of St. Basil who was martyred for the faith. *(adapted from johnsanidopoulos.com)*

Here is some information about the lives of the lesser-known members of this illustrious family:

Macrina the Elder

She's called "Confessor of the Faith". Her family contains so many saints she's known as the mother and grandmother of saints. She should be given another title – Bridge of Theology – for her invisible contributions to the understanding of our faith, and its expression in the world. Born about 270 AD, St. Macrina the Elder grew up a pagan. Most of the city she lived in was pagan, until St. Gregory Thaumaturgis arrived. St. Gregory studied under Origen, a man who by turns was strikingly orthodox and breathtakingly heretical, and undoubtedly brilliant.

After Gregory's studies, he became bishop in the city of Neocaeasarea, in the region of Pontus, located south of the Black Sea in what are now the regions of Amayra and Tokat in Turkey. Macrina and her husband became acquainted with him, and she eventually became his spiritual daughter. St. Macrina so loved and revered him she kept his relics her entire life, finally settling them in a chapel at the family's estates at Annesi, and cherished the wisdom he passed on to her. St. Macrina lived under some of the worst persecutions of the early Christian era.

St. Gregory the Theologian describes the last persecution under Maximian as "the most frightful and severe of all." Spared the fate of the martyrs, St. Macrina nevertheless suffered for her beliefs. It's believed by some that her husband was

martyred. She and her household escaped to the forests surrounding their city, and hid for seven years. That she survived is due solely to God's miraculous intervention. At his funeral oration for his close friend, St. Basil the Great, St. Gregory the Theologian described God's provision for St. Macrina: ". . . their quarry lay before them, with food come of its own accord, a complete banquet prepared without effort, stags appearing all at once from some place in the hills."

Once the persecution had died down, Macrina and her family returned to Neocaesarea. A short time later, the Roman authorities stripped them of everything they owned and turned them out into the streets. With nothing more than the clothes on her back to call her own, St. Macrina was forced to rely on the generosity and mercy of God in order to survive. Begging in the streets, telling stories for the few paltry coins it brought, and accepting the cast-off food and clothing of her former equals, she endured their pity, and the insults and mockery of the pagans in her town. She must have learned valuable lessons in humility. She raised her child, St. Basil (the Elder), as a single parent. In spite of the obstacles, she succeeded in passing on her faith and tradition to him. St. Macrina the Elder died in approximately 340 AD, when her eldest grandchild was only twelve. She never lived to see her grandchildren's successes, or their spirited defense of our faith.

She made no new insights into our understanding of the faith. She left no letters, homilies or books. But by simply living what she believed, by simply being a mother and a grandmother, by teaching her children and grandchildren by word and example, by telling her children stories of her spiritual father and through her steadfast faith, St. Macrina the Elder became a bridge of theology, passing on the Tradition entrusted to her, and enabling two brilliant men to take the next steps in theology. (*adapted from myocn.net*)

St. Basil the Elder

Basil the Elder, the father of Basil the Great, grew up in Caesarea in Cappadocia, studied law and rhetoric, and then made a career for himself in Caesarea as a lawyer and professor of rhetoric. Gregory the Theologian portrays the father of his friend Basil the Great, in his funeral oration for the latter, as an upright Christian and a master of every virtue. Basil the Elder was married to Saint Emmelia, a woman of excellent and virtuous character and of outstanding beauty; she had lost her parents at an early age and married Basil the Elder so as to avoid the many dangers of the world. The reputation of this Christian married couple spread very quickly through all of Pontus and Cappadocia, especially because they showed great zeal in establishing works of corporal mercy for the poor and pilgrims.

From the marriage of this noble, saintly couple, Basil the Elder and Emmelia, came ten children, the most famous among them being Saint Basil the Great, Saint

Gregory of Nyssa, Saint Macrina the Younger, and Saint Peter of Sebaste. Basil the Elder died soon after the birth of his last-born child (who later became Bishop Peter of Sebaste), around 349. (*adapted from Married Saints and Blesseds: Through the Centuries by Ferdinand Holbroeck S.T.D.*)

St. Emmelia

Saint Emmelia (also Emily, Emilia, Emelia), was part of a holy family and most famous for being the mother of Saint Basil the Great. There are very few descriptions of Saint Emmelia's life. She was the daughter of a martyr and the daughter-in-law of Saint Macrina the Elder (260-340). Along with her husband, Saint Basil the Elder (+ 349), she gave birth to nine or ten children. She instilled the Orthodox faith in her children, teaching them to pray and devote their lives to the service of the Church. Among these were Saint Basil the Great (+ 379), his sister Saint Macrina the Younger (c.330– 379) and his brothers Saints Gregory of Nyssa (334-394), Naukratios of Mount Nitria (332-358), and Peter of Sebaste (345/7-392). It is also a widely held tradition that Saint Theosevia (c. 335-c.385) was his youngest sister (though some claim she was the spouse of Saint Gregory of Nyssa), who is also a saint in the Church. There are also about four or five other girls, unknown sisters of Saint Basil. Therefore, Saint Emmelia is often called “the mother of saints.”

When her son, Naukratios, suddenly died at the age of twenty-seven, she was consoled by her eldest daughter, Macrina. Macrina reminded her that it was not befitting to a Christian to “mourn as those who have no hope” and inspired her to hope courageously in the resurrection bequeathed to us by the saving passion of the Lord. After her children left home, Emmelia was persuaded by Macrina to forsake the world. Together they founded a monastery for women. Emmelia divided the family property among her children. Retaining only some meager possessions, she and Macrina withdrew to a secluded family property in Pontus, picturesquely located on the banks of the Iris River and not far from Saint Basil's wilderness home. A number of liberated female slaves desired to join the pair, and a convent was formed. They lived under one roof and held everything in common: they ate, worked, and prayed together. They were so eager to advance in virtue that they regarded fasting as food and poverty as riches. The harmony of this model community of women was unspoiled by anger, jealousy, hatred, or pride. Indeed, as the Church sings of monastics, they lived like angels in the flesh.

Living in this manner for many years, Emmelia reached old age. When an illness signaled her departure from this world, her son Peter came to her side. Together with Macrina, he tended to his mother in her last days. As the oldest and the youngest, Macrina and Peter held a special place in Emmelia's heart. Before committing her soul to the Lord, she raised her voice to heaven, saying, “To you, O

Lord, I give the first fruits and the tithe of the fruit of my womb. The first fruit is my first-born daughter, and the tithe is this, my youngest son. Let these be for you a rightly acceptable sacrifice, and let your holiness descend upon them!" Saint Emmelia reposed in 375 and was buried as she had requested, beside her husband in the chapel at their estate in Annesi, where Naukratios had also been laid. *(adapted from johnsanidopoulos.com)*

St. Naukratios

Saint Naukratios was born in 332 and was the son of Basil the Elder and Emmelia of Caesarea. He had distinguished himself both in scholarship and Christian devotion, as an active hermit, and a living example for his famous brothers, Basil of Caesarea and Gregory of Nyssa. He was the second of four brothers and died young in a tragic fishing accident in 358. His brother, Saint Gregory of Nyssa, gives us his brief biography in his Life of Macrina: "The second of the four brothers, Naukratios by name, who came next after the great Basil, excelled the rest in natural endowments and physical beauty, in strength, speed and ability to turn his hand to anything. When he had reached his twenty-first year, and had given such demonstration of his studies by speaking in public, that the whole audience in the theatre was thrilled, he was led by a divine providence to despise all that was already in his grasp, and drawn by an irresistible impulse went off to a life of solitude and poverty. He took nothing with him but himself, save that one of the servants named Chrysapius followed him, because of the affection he had towards his master and the intention he had formed to lead the same life. So he lived by himself, having found a solitary spot on the banks of the Iris - a river flowing through the midst of Pontus. It rises actually in Armenia, passes through our parts, and discharges its stream into the Black Sea. By it the young man found a place with a luxuriant growth of trees and a hill nestling under the mass of the overhanging mountain. There he lived far removed from the noises of the city and the distractions that surround the lives both of the soldier and the pleader in the law courts.

Having thus freed himself from the din of cares that impedes man's higher life, with his own hands he looked after some old people who were living in poverty and feebleness, considering it appropriate to his mode of life to make such a work his care. So the generous youth would go on fishing expeditions, and since he was expert in every form of sport, he provided food to his grateful clients by this means. And at the same time by such exercises he was taming his own manhood. Besides this, he also gladly obeyed his mother's wishes whenever she issued a command. And so in these two ways he guided his life, subduing his youthful nature by toils and caring assiduously for his mother, and thus keeping the divine commands he was traveling home to God. In this manner he completed the fifth

year of his life as a philosopher, by which he made his mother happy, both by the way in which he adorned his own life by continence, and by the devotion of all his powers to do the will of her that bore him.

Then there fell on the mother a grievous and tragic affliction, contrived, I think, by the Adversary, which brought trouble and mourning upon all the family. For he was snatched suddenly away from life. No previous sickness had prepared them for the blow, nor did any of the usual and well known mischances bring death upon the young man. Having started out on one of the expeditions, by which he provided necessaries for the old men under his care, he was brought back home dead, together with Chrysapius who shared his life. His mother was far away, three days distant from the scene of the tragedy. Someone came to her telling the bad news. Perfect though she was in every department of virtue, yet nature dominated her as it does others. For she collapsed, and in a moment lost both breath and speech, since her reason failed her under the disaster, and she was thrown to the ground by the assault of the evil tidings, like some noble athlete hit by an unexpected blow. And now the virtue of the great Macrina was displayed. Facing the disaster in a rational spirit, she both preserved herself from collapse, and becoming the prop of her mother's weakness, raised her up from the abyss of grief, and by her own steadfastness and imperturbability taught her mother's soul to be brave.” (*adapted from johnsanidopoulos.com*)

St. Peter of Sebaste

St. Peter of Sebaste was the youngest of ten children, and lost his father in his cradle, some think before he was born; and his eldest sister, Macrina, took care of his education, in which it was her only aim to instruct him in the maxims of religion, and form him to perfect piety; profane studies she thought of little use to one, who designed to make salvation the sole end of all his inquiries and pursuits, nor did he ever make them any part of his employment, confining his views to a monastic state. His mother had founded two monasteries, one for men, the other for women; the former she put under the direction of her son Basil, the latter under that of her daughter Macrina.

Peter, whose thoughts were wholly bent on cultivating the seeds of piety that had been sown in him, retired into the house governed by his brother, situated on the bank of the river Iris; when St. Basil was obliged to quit that post, in 362, he left the abbacy in the hands of St. Peter, who discharged this office for several years with great prudence and virtue. When the provinces of Pontus and Cappadocia were visited by a severe famine, he gave a remarkable proof of his charity; human prudence would have advised him to be frugal in the relief of others, till his own family should be secured against that calamity; but Peter had studied the principles of Christian charity in another school, and liberally disposed of all that belonged to

his monastery, and whatever he could raise, to supply with necessaries the numerous crowds that daily resorted to him, in that time of distress.

Soon after Saint Basil was made bishop of Cæsarea in Cappadocia, in 370, he promoted his brother Peter to the priesthood; the holy abbot looked on the holy orders he had received as a fresh engagement to perfection. His brother St. Basil, died on the 1st of January, in 379, and his sister Macrina in November, the same year. Eustathius, bishop of Sebaste, in Armenia, a violent Arian, and a furious persecutor of St. Basil, seems to have died soon after them; for St. Peter was consecrated bishop of Sebaste, in 380, to root out the Arian heresy in that diocese, where it had taken deep root; the zeal of a saint was necessary, nor can we doubt that God placed our saint in that dignity for this purpose. A letter which St. Peter wrote, and which is prefixed to St. Gregory of Nyssa's books against Eunomius, has entitled him to a rank among the ecclesiastical writers, and is a standing proof, that though he had confined himself to sacred studies, yet by good conversation and reading, and by the dint of genius, and an excellent understanding, he was inferior to none but his incomparable brother Basil, and his colleague Gregory the Theologian, in solid eloquence. In 381, he attended the general council held at Constantinople, and joined the other bishops in condemning the Macedonian heretics. Not only his brother St. Gregory; but also Theodoret, and all antiquity, bear testimony to his extraordinary sanctity, prudence, and zeal. His death happened in summer, about the year 387, and his brother of Nyssa mentions, that his memory was honored at Sebaste (probably the very year after his death) by an anniversary solemnity, with several martyrs of that city. (*adapted from Butler's Lives of the Saints*)

St. Theosevia

There is strong evidence that Saint Theosevia (or Theosebia) the Deaconess was the wife of Saint Gregory of Nyssa, but this is not generally accepted for lack of complete evidence. An ambiguous expression in the Letter of Condolence written by Gregory the Theologian to Gregory of Nyssa upon the death of Theosevia the Deaconess, expressly calls her his "sister" and "consort". The latter word "consort" in Greek is syzigon, which also means "spouse".

This and other language certainly indicates a close relationship which scholars generally agree either mean she was Gregory of Nyssa's wife or sister. It should be mentioned also that in his treatise On Virginity (ch.3), Gregory of Nyssa does indicate that he may have been married, though this also is a bit ambiguous. Saint Theosebia was a virgin and served the Holy Church as a deaconess, caring for the sick, distributing food to vagrants, raising orphans and preparing women for holy Baptism.

When Saint Gregory of Nyssa was in exile for three years, Saint Theosebia was with him and she shared in all the tribulations of a life of wandering. Saint Theosebia died in 385, and Saint Gregory the Theologian praised her in a eulogy.

Below is Epistle 197 of St. Gregory the Theologian to St. Gregory of Nyssa in honor of St. Theosevia upon her repose: “I had started in all haste to go to you, partly for the sake of seeing you after so long, and partly that I might admire your patience and philosophy (for I had heard of it) at the departure of your holy and blessed sister, as a good and perfect man, a minister of God, who knows better than any the things both of God and man; and who regards as a very light thing that which to others would be most heavy, namely to have lived with such a soul, and to send her away and store her up in the safe garner, like a shock of the threshing floor gathered in due season, (Job 5:26) to use the words of Holy Scripture; and that in such time that she, having tasted the joys of life, escaped its sorrows through the shortness of her life; and before she had to wear mourning for you, was honored by you with that fair funeral honor which is due to such as she.

I too, believe me, long to depart, if not as you do, which were much to say, yet only less than you. But what must we feel in presence of a long prevailing law of God which has now taken my Theosebia (for I call her mine because she lived a godly life; for spiritual kindred is better than bodily), Theosebia, the glory of the church, the adornment of Christ, the helper of our generation, the hope of woman; Theosebia, the most beautiful and glorious among all the beauty of the Brethren; Theosebia, truly sacred, truly consort of a priest, and of equal honor and worthy of the Great Sacraments, Theosebia, whom all future time shall receive, resting on immortal pillars, that is, on the souls of all who have known her now, and of all who shall be hereafter. And do not wonder that I often invoke her name. For I rejoice even in the remembrance of the blessed one. Let this, a great deal in few words, be her epitaph from me, and my word of condolence for you, though you yourself are quite able to console others in this way through your philosophy in all things. Our meeting (which I greatly long for) is prevented by the reason I mentioned. But we pray with one another as long as we are in the world, until the common end, to which we are drawing near, overtake us. Wherefore we must bear all things, since we shall not for long have either to rejoice or to suffer.” *(adapted from johnsanidopoulos.com and oca.org)*

Parish News

1. Fr. Joseph is planning a trip to visit the Kardiotissa myrrh-streaming icon of the Mother of God in Taylor, Pennsylvania on Wednesday, January 24th. Contact Fr. Joseph if you are interested in going. If you're planning to drive, the address is

743 S. Keyser Ave, Taylor, PA; it's a good 4½ hour drive from the church. The moleben starts at 6:00 PM.

2. The annual Right to Life March will occur in downtown Washington, DC this Friday, January 19th. We' will meet at the Orthodox for Life banner. See marchforlife.org for further details.

3. Holy water was blessed on Theophany for parish use. If you'd like to take some home, please bring a container. Contact Fr. Joseph or Pani Stacey to get your house blessed.

VOLUNTEERS WANTED

We are excited to announce that St. Thomas is forming a choir! Rehearsals will start in February in preparation for Easter. All interested men and women in our parish who enjoy singing are encouraged to get in touch with Adina or Bernard Vallandingham at adinavall@yahoo.com or valland.b@gmail.com. The choir will first meet on Sunday, February 4th after church to discuss rehearsal schedule and location. The first rehearsal is scheduled for Thursday, February 8th at 6:30 pm.

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

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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, Presbytera Katie Baker and family, Santiago Alzugaray, Alicia Barosio and family, Jeffrey Carey, Tatyana and Slava Chumak & family, Xenia Chilkowich, Jon Church, Ramius Connour, Curtis Cooper, Luke Cooper, Tina Crull, Mary Diane David, Ron Dominiecki, Linda A. Georgiev, Heather Himler, John Homick, Cameron Houk, Helen Janowiak, John M. Janowiak, Tucker Karl and family, Robert Karpin, Andrew Kinn, Kopan family, Brian, Helen, and Luke Mahony, Valentina Makowelski, Susan Matula, 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, and all those in need of our prayers. (Please advise Fr. Joseph of changes.)