

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.



December 31, 2017 – Sunday After/Apodosis of the Nativity Sunday Before Theophany | Ven. Melania of Rome

On the present Sunday after the Nativity of Christ the Holy Church commemorates St. Joseph the Betrothed and the protector of the virginity of the Most Holy Theotokos, and together with him is also commemorated his flight with the All-holy Virgin and newborn Child Jesus into Egypt (Mt. 2:13). The Holy King and Prophet David is commemorated on the present day as the ancestor of ancestors of the Lord Jesus in the flesh, and St. James, the brother of the Lord, because according to tradition he took part in travel with the holy family to Egypt.

Materials for the Leavetaking of the Nativity are taken from the service of the Feast day itself in the Menaion. The Scripture readings at Liturgy, however, are of the day, not of the Feast. The Prokeimenon, Alleluia verses, and Communion hymn are all of the Feast.

There are no materials in the Menaion for the Sunday before Theophany; however, there are scripture readings appointed (because today is also the Sunday after Nativity, these readings are prescribed for liturgy tomorrow). (*adapted from the Bulgakov Handbook*)

Saint Melania was born in Rome into a devout Christian family. Her parents, people of property and wealth, hoped that their daughter would marry and have children who would inherit their wealth.

At fourteen years of age Melania was married to the illustrious youth Apinianus. From the very beginning of their married life, Saint Melania asked her husband to live with her in chastity or else release her from the marriage. Apinianus answered, "I cannot agree to this right now. When we have two children to inherit the property, then we shall both renounce the world."

Soon Melania gave birth to a daughter, whom the young parents dedicated to God. Continuing to live together in marriage, Melania secretly wore a hairshirt and spent her nights in prayer. The second child, a boy, was premature and had severe complications. They baptized him, and he departed to the Lord.

Seeing the suffering of his wife, Apinianus asked the Lord to preserve Saint Melania's life, and he vowed to spend the rest of their life together in chastity. Recovering, Saint Melania stopped wearing her beautiful clothing and jewelry. Soon their daughter also died. The parents of Saint Melania did not support the young couple's desire to devote themselves to God. It was only when Saint Melania's father became deathly ill, that he asked their forgiveness and permitted them to follow their chosen path, asking them to pray for him.

The saints then left the city of Rome, and began a new life completely dedicated to the service of God. Apinianus at this time was twenty-four years of age, and Melania twenty. They began to visit the sick, to take in wanderers, and to help the indigent. They visited those who were exiled, and mine-convicts, and the destitute, there in debtor's prison. After selling their estates in Italy and Spain, they generously helped monasteries, hospitals, widows and orphans in Mesopotamia, Syria, Egypt, Phoenicia, and Palestine.

Many churches and hospitals were built with their assistance. Churches of both West and East benefited from them. Leaving their native land, they set sail for Africa, and a strong storm arose while they were at sea. The sailors said that this was because of the wrath of God, but Saint Melania said that it was not God's will that they should go directly to their destination.

The waves carried the ship to an island on which barbarians had landed. The besiegers demanded a ransom from the inhabitants, or else they threatened to lay waste the city. The saints supplied the necessary ransom, and thus saved the city and its people from destruction.

Resuming their voyage, they landed in Africa and helped all the needy there. With the blessing of the local bishops, they made offerings to churches and monasteries.

During this time Saint Melania continued to humble her flesh by strict fasting, and she fortified her soul by constantly reading the Word of God, making copies of the sacred books and distributing them to those who lacked them. She sewed a hairshirt for herself, put it on, and continued to wear it.

The saints spent seven years in Carthage, and then decided to visit Jerusalem. At Alexandria, they were welcomed by the bishop, Saint Cyril, and they met in church with the holy Elder Nestorius, who was possessed of the gift of prophecy and healing. The Elder turned to them and told them to have courage and patience in expectation of the Glory of Heaven. At Jerusalem, the saints distributed their remaining gold to the destitute and then spent their days in poverty and prayer. After a short visit to Egypt, where the saints visited many of the desert Fathers, Saint Melania secluded herself in a cell on the Mount of Olives. Only occasionally did she see Saint Apinianus.

Later, she founded a monastery, where eventually ninety virgins lived in obedience to Saint Melania. Out of humility, she would not consent to be abbess, and lived and prayed in solitude as before. In her instructions, Saint Melania urged the sisters to be vigilant and to pray, to disdain their own opinions and cultivate first of all love for God and for one another, to keep the holy Orthodox Faith, and to guard their purity of soul and of body.

In particular, she exhorted them to be obedient to the will of God. Calling to mind the words of the Apostle Paul, she counselled them to keep the fasts “not with wailing, nor from compulsion, but in virtuous disposition with love for God.” By her efforts an oratory and altar were built in the monastery, where they enshrined the relics of saints: the Prophet Zachariah, the holy Protomartyr Stephen, and the Forty Martyrs of Sebaste. About this time Saint Apinianus fell asleep in the Lord. Saint Melania buried his relics and there spent another four years in fasting and unceasing prayer.

Saint Melania wanted to build a men’s monastery on the Mount of the Ascension of the Lord. The Lord blessed her intent by sending a benefactor who provided the means for the monastery. Joyfully accepting it, Saint Melania finished the great work in a single year. In this monastery, saintly men began to lift up unceasing prayer in the church of the Ascension of Christ. Having completed her tasks, the saint left Jerusalem for Constantinople, hoping to save the soul of her pagan uncle Volusianus who had traveled there from Rome. Along the way she prayed at the relics of Saint Laurence, at the place of his martyrdom, and received auspicious signs. Arriving in Constantinople, the saint found her uncle had fallen ill. Her demeanor and her inspired discourses had a profound influence on the sick man. He gave up pagan impiety and died a Christian.

During this time many inhabitants of the capital were deceived by the heretical teaching of Nestorius. Saint Melania accepted anyone who turned to her for proper explanation, converting many of them to Orthodoxy. Many miracles were worked through the prayers of the saint. Returning to her own monastery, the saint sensed the approach of death, and told this to the priest and the sisters. They listened to her final instructions with deep sorrow and with tears. Having asked their prayers and commanding them to preserve themselves in purity, she received the Holy Mysteries with joy. Saint Melania peacefully gave up her soul to the Lord in the year 439. (*from oca.org*)

Today's Epistle Lesson – St. Paul's Letter to the Galatians 1:11-19

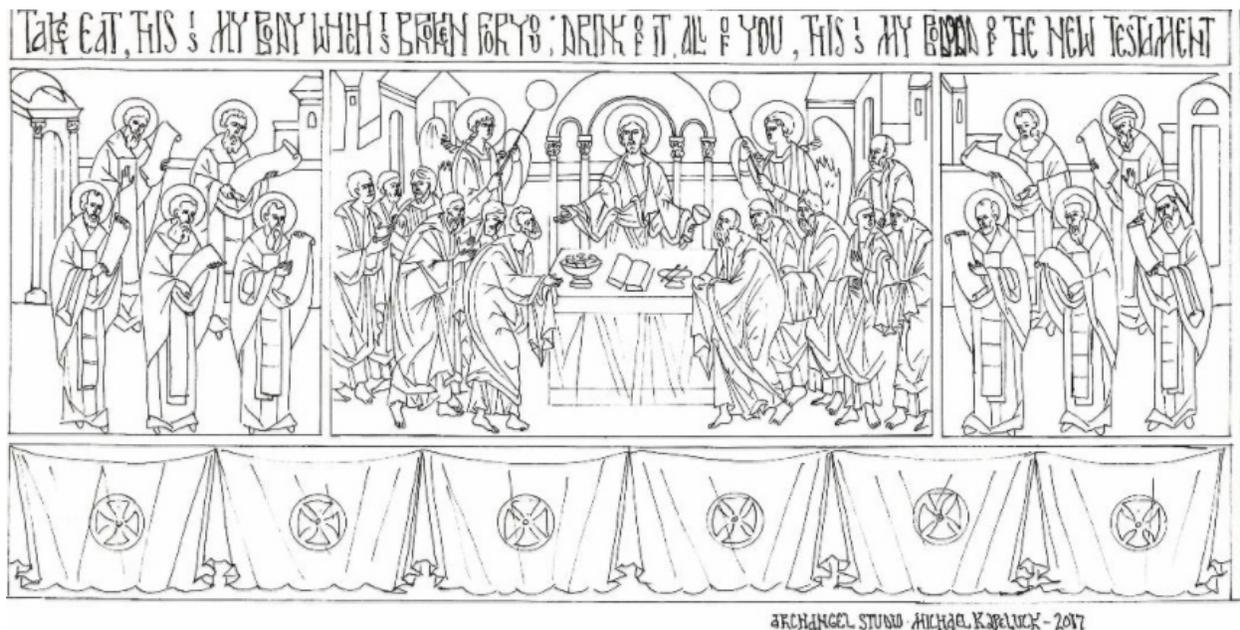
Brethren, I make known to you that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came through the revelation of Jesus Christ. For you have heard of my former conduct in Judaism, how I persecuted the church of God beyond measure and tried to destroy it. And I advanced in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries in my own nation, being more exceedingly zealous for the traditions of my fathers. But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb and called me through His grace, to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately confer with flesh and blood, nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me; but I went to Arabia, and returned again to Damascus. Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and remained with him fifteen days. But I saw none of the other apostles except James, the Lord's brother.

Today's Gospel Lesson – Matthew 2:13-23

At that time, when the magi had departed, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream, saying, "Arise, take the young Child and His mother, flee to Egypt, and stay there until I bring you word; for Herod will seek the young Child to destroy Him." When he arose, he took the young Child and His mother by night and departed for Egypt, and was there until the death of Herod, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying, "Out of Egypt I called My Son."

Then Herod, when he saw that he was deceived by the wise men, was exceedingly angry; and he sent forth and put to death all the male children who were in Bethlehem and in all its districts, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had determined from the wise men. Then was fulfilled what was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet, saying: "A voice was heard in Ramah, lamentation, weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, refusing to be comforted, because they are no more."

Now when Herod was dead, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, saying, “Arise, take the young Child and His mother, and go to the land of Israel, for those who sought the young Child’s life are dead.” Then he arose, took the young Child and His mother, and came into the land of Israel. But when he heard that Archelaus was reigning over Judea instead of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there. And being warned by God in a dream, he turned aside into the region of Galilee. And he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, “He shall be called a Nazarene.”



ARCHANGEL STUDIO MICHAEL KARLICK - 2017

Beauty Will Save the World (Dostoyevsky, The Idiot)

We are moving forward with the next phase of iconography at St. Thomas, which will complete work in the Narthex (the entry of the church) and in the Holy Place (the curved wall in the altar area). Icons of two Seraphim on the ends of the curved walls will cost \$1,700 each. Icons of the ten Bishops flanking the icon of the Heavenly Banquet in front of the altar (either side of the Banquet already in the Holy Place) will cost \$2,000 each. We will also be moving Gorazd of Prague, a Bishop whose icon currently hangs in the Nave, into the Holy Place with an icon of John of Damascus being put in his place, which can be sponsored for \$600. Four new icons will be completed in the nave, for \$750 each. The writing above the icons, as well as the "tablecloth" below will be completed, and costs have been combined with the sponsorship of the Bishops.

The icons will be installed in 2018. The last time we offered this opportunity to glorify God in His church, the response was tremendous. We are ready to collect

funds to complete the project, so if you are interested in participating, please contact Josh Moore by phone at (541) 601-8413 or at jgmoore01@gmail.com.

Please see the Church website for up-to-date sponsorship information and pictures of the icon work to be completed. Any donation of \$500 or more is eligible for a memorial plaque in the social hall. **Currently** we have: Pledged/Received Funds: \$11,517 | Remaining Needed: \$14,883.

The Bishops to be placed in the Holy Place are currently planned to be (\$2,000 to sponsor one): Basil the Great, Gregory the Great, John Chrysostom, Cyprian of Carthage, Athanasius the Great, Cyril of Alexandria, Leo the Great, Polycarp, Ignatius of Antioch (sponsored), and Peter Moghila.

2 Seraphim in the Holy Place (\$1,700 to sponsor; 1 sponsored).

John of Damascus in the nave (\$600 to sponsor)

In the Narthex: Pr. Daniel, David, Elijah, and Melchizedek. (\$750 to sponsor).



A Word From the Holy Fathers

The Book of Psalms is in itself the most useful of all books. It prophesies the future, it commemorates an event, it gives laws for living, and it lays down the rules for activity. In short, it is a general treasury of good teachings that one carefully finds to everyone's benefit. It heals even the chronic wounds of the soul, and the recently wounded submits to a speedy healing, and it raises the ill, and supports the uninjured; in general, in howsoever many ways possible, it subdues the passions that in human life under various conditions dominate the souls. And herewith it produces in man that quiet delight and satisfaction, which makes the mind chaste.

The Holy Spirit knew that it is difficult to lead the human race to virtue, and that because of the propensity to pleasure we neglect the right way. And so what is one to do? The pleasantry of sweet singing is mixed in with the teachings, that together with the sweetness and the melodiousness to the ear, we received by an imperceptible image even that which is pleasing in the word. And wise physicians, who prescribe bitter medicine to drink to those who turn away from him in disgust, often smooth it over with a cup of honey.

To this end this structured chanting of psalms are invented, so that even children and grown-ups, or in general those not brought up by the rules, or so it seems, only sang them, and actually trained their souls. Is it not then likely that the common

people, usually careless, will go from here (that is, from the temple), comfortably keeping in their memory the apostolic and prophetic commandment, and sing verses from the psalms even in their homes, and even exclaim them in the market place? And if he, who like the wild beasts becomes furious with anger, will soon become pleasant upon hearing the psalms, his anger goes away, immediately taming the ferocity in his soul with sweet singing.

The psalm is the quietness in souls, the dispenser of peace; it pacifies rebellious and agitated thoughts; it softens the irritability of the soul and makes intemperance be wise. The psalm is the mediator of friendship, the solidarity among the distant, the reconciliation of combatants. For who can still count as an enemy one who uplifts with one voice to God? Therefore psalm singing delivers to us one of the greatest good that is love, discovering singing together instead of knots for unification, reducing the people to one harmonious choir.

The psalm is a refuge from demons, the accession under the protection of Angels, a weapon against nightly terrors, rest from daily work, safety for children, the adornment of blossoming age, the consolation of old age, the most appropriate apparel for women. The psalm inhabits deserts, makes the market places fully wise. For the new ones walking in the way it is the beginning of learning, for the successful it is the increase of leadership, for the perfected it is the affirmation; it is the voice of the Church. It makes feasts bright; it brings forth sorrow as if from God. For the psalm even compels tears from a heart of stone.

The psalm is the preoccupation of Angels, the heavenly cohabitation, and the spiritual incense. It is the wise invention of the Teacher, who constructed it in order that we sing and together study what is useful. From this even the lessons are better imprinted on our souls. For what is studied with compulsion does not remain in us for a long time; but that with pleasure and pleasantness is accepted and takes root more firmly in our souls.

What will you learn from the psalms? Will you not know from here great courage, strict justice, honest chastity, perfection of good sense, image of repentance, a measure of patience, and anything good? What would you call that? Here is the perfect theology, prediction of the coming Christ in the flesh, the threat of the judgment, the hope of resurrection, the fear of punishment, the promise of glory, the revelation of mysteries. Everything is gathered in the Book of Psalms as if it were in a great and common treasury.

– St. Basil the Great



Encyclical of Archbishop Demetrios for The Nativity of Christ 2017

Light of Light, Brightness of the Father, You have made the whole creation shine with joy!

(Hymn of Vespers of the Feast)

Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

We glorify Christ on this blessed and glorious Feast for having come to us and for revealing the abundant and redeeming grace of God. We glorify Him for entering our humanity for our salvation. We glorify the miracle of His Incarnation and give thanks with great joy for this mighty act of God. We glorify God before all the world, because our Savior has come and *the people who sat in darkness, and upon those who sat in the region and shadow of death, Light has dawned.* (Matthew 4:16)

Today, the Son of God, as Radiance sent by the Father, has come and illuminated all of Creation. As in the darkness of night when the angels appeared to the shepherds, *and the glory of the Lord shone all around them* (Luke 2:9), Christ enters a world that has fallen into the darkness of sin and in need of the hope of light. Christ is born, and just as the shepherds we will go out glorifying and praising God for all that we have seen in the light of this holy Feast.

We glorify Him today, for as the Son of Brightness, as the Live-giving light, Christ illuminates the path to God. As the star led the wise men to Bethlehem so they could worship the newborn King, He reveals to us the way of regeneration and salvation. He is the light that guides us on our way to communion with God on our journey of faith. As He is the dawn of a new day of deliverance, we see that *every valley has been lifted up, and every mountain and hill has been made low* (Isaiah 40:4), and in His glory the way of the Lord has been revealed.

Christ is born, and we now see truth. He is the light of divine wisdom, and His radiance dispels the shadows of deception, fulfills the ancient prophecies, and reveals the divine plan for our redemption. All who witness His Holy Nativity glorify Him as being the ultimate light of truth and the sublime wisdom of God.

On this holy Feast we proclaim that our Lord and Savior has come. We join with the heavenly hosts in glorifying Him. As His glorious light shines in and through us, we witness to the world that Christ brings light in the darkness. His glory dispels fear and hopelessness. His radiance overcomes hatred and greed. The brilliance of His Incarnation reveals the truth of our life, existence and purpose, freeing us from sin and death. On this blessed day, may the light of Christ and His Holy Nativity shine in your hearts. May you know the assurance of His promises

and the joy of His presence. As you cherish this blessed time with your brothers and sisters in the faith, and with family and friends, may His light shine through you so that others will glorify Him and see the way to truth and life eternal.

With paternal love in Christ,

† **DEMETRIOS,**

Archbishop of America

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.

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 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, 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, Deanna Jarrett, 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. Nectaros 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.)