

We would like to welcome all parish visitors and invite you to join us after the Liturgy for Coffee hour.



ORTHODOX CHURCH OF THE MOTHER OF GOD

OCA – Diocese of New York & New Jersey

The Most Reverend Michael, Archbishop of NY & the Diocese of NY/NJ

V. Rev. Dr. Matthew Searfoorce, Temporary Rector

Sub-Deacon Edward Dawson Sub-Deacon Vlashi

Parish Council President: Andrew Romanofsky

Parish Council Vice President: Sub-Deacon Edward

HYMNS OF THE DAY

Troparion in Tone 1

By raising Lazarus from the dead before Thy passion, Thou didst confirm the universal resurrection, O Christ God. Like the children with the palms of victory, we cry out to Thee, O Vanquisher of Death: “Hosanna in the highest! Blessed is He that comes in the Name of the Lord.”

Troparion in Tone 4

When we were buried with Thee in baptism, O Christ God, we were made worthy of eternal life by Thy Resurrection. Now we praise Thee and sing: “Hosanna in the highest! Blessed is He that comes in the Name of the Lord!”

Kontakion in Tone 6

Sitting on Thy throne in Heaven, carried on a foal on earth, O Christ God, accept the praise of angels and the songs of children, who sing: “Blessed is He Who comes to recall Adam!”

Prayer Requests

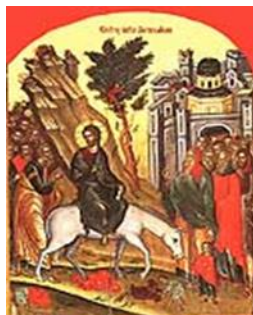
In Memory of:

Olga Romanofsky, mother of Andrew Romanofsky, offered by the Romanofsky family.

SAINTS AND FEASTS OF THE DAY

APRIL 1, 2018

THE ENTRANCE OF OUR LORD INTO JERUSALEM (PALM SUNDAY)



Entry of Our Lord into Jerusalem (Palm Sunday)

Palm Sunday is the celebration of the triumphant entrance of Christ into the royal city of Jerusalem. He rode on a colt for which He Himself had sent, and He permitted the people to hail Him publicly as a king. A large crowd met Him in a manner befitting royalty, waving palm branches and placing their garments in His path. They greeted Him with these words: “Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel! (John 12:13).

This day together with the raising of Lazarus are signs pointing beyond themselves to the mighty deeds and events which consummate Christ’s earthly ministry. The time of fulfillment was at hand. Christ’s raising of Lazarus points to the destruction of death and

We would like to welcome all parish visitors and invite you to join us after the Liturgy for Coffee hour.

the joy of resurrection which will be accessible to all through His own death and resurrection. His entrance into Jerusalem is a fulfillment of the messianic prophecies about the king who will enter his holy city to establish a final kingdom. "Behold, your king is coming to you, humble, and mounted on an ass, and on a colt, the foal of an ass" (Zech 9:9).

Finally, the events of these triumphant two days are but the passage to Holy Week: the "hour" of suffering and death for which Christ came. Thus the triumph in a earthly sense is extremely short-lived. Jesus enters openly into the midst of His enemies, publicly saying and doing those things which mostly enrage them. The people themselves will soon reject Him. They misread His brief earthly triumph as a sign of something else: His emergence as a political messiah who will lead them to the glories of an earthly kingdom.

Our Pledge

The liturgy of the Church is more than meditation or praise concerning past events. It communicates to us the eternal presence and power of the events being celebrated and makes us participants in those events. Thus the services of Lazarus Saturday and Palm Sunday bring us to our own moment of life and death and entrance into the Kingdom of God: a Kingdom not of this world, a Kingdom accessible in the Church through repentance and baptism.

On Palm Sunday palm and willow branches are blessed in the Church. We take them in order to raise them up and greet the King and Ruler of our life: Jesus Christ. We take them in order to reaffirm our baptismal pledges. As the One who raised Lazarus and entered Jerusalem to go to His voluntary Passion stands in our midst, we are faced with the same question addressed to us at baptism: "Do you accept Christ?" We give our answer by daring to take the branch and raise it up: "I accept Him as King and God!"

Thus, on the eve of Christ's Passion, in the celebration of the joyful cycle of the triumphant days of Lazarus Saturday and Palm Sunday, we reunite ourselves to Christ, affirm His Lordship over the totality of our life, and express our readiness to follow Him to His Kingdom:

... that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, that if possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead (Philippians 3:10-11).

Very Rev. Paul Lazor



Venerable Mary of Egypt

Saint Zosimas (April 4) was a monk at a certain Palestinian monastery on the outskirts of Caesarea. Having dwelt at the monastery since his childhood, he lived there in asceticism until he reached the age of fifty-three. Then he was disturbed by the thought that he had attained perfection, and needed no one to instruct him. "Is there a monk anywhere who can show me some form of asceticism that I have not attained? Is there anyone who has surpassed me in spiritual sobriety and deeds?"

Suddenly, an angel of the Lord appeared to him and said, "Zosimas, you have struggled valiantly, as far as this is in the power of man. However, there is no one who is righteous (Rom 3:10). So that you may know how many other ways lead to salvation, leave your native land, like Abraham from the house of his father (Gen 12:1), and go to

the monastery by the Jordan."

Abba Zosimas immediately left the monastery, and following the angel, he went to the Jordan monastery and settled in it.

Here he met Elders who were adept in contemplation, and also in their struggles. Never did anyone utter an idle word. Instead, they sang constantly, and prayed all night long. Abba Zosimas began to imitate the spiritual activity of the holy monks.

Thus much time passed, and the holy Forty Day Fast approached. There was a certain custom at the monastery, which was why God had led Saint Zosimas there. On the First Sunday of Great Lent the igumen served the Divine Liturgy, everyone received the All-Pure Body and Blood of Christ. Afterwards, they went to the trapeza for a small repast, and then assembled once more in church.

The monks prayed and made prostrations, asking forgiveness one of another. Then they made a prostration before the igumen and asked his blessing for the struggle that lay before them. During the Psalm "The Lord is my Light and my Savior, whom shall I fear? The Lord is defender of my life, of whom shall I be afraid?" (Ps 26/27:1), they opened the monastery gate and went off into the wilderness.

We would like to welcome all parish visitors and invite you to join us after the Liturgy for Coffee hour.

Each took with him as much food as he needed, and went into the desert. When their food ran out, they ate roots and desert plants. The monks crossed the Jordan and scattered in various directions, so that no one might see how another fasted or how they spent their time.

The monks returned to the monastery on Palm Sunday, each having his own conscience as a witness of his ascetic struggles. It was a rule of the monastery that no one asked how anyone else had toiled in the desert.

Abba Zosimas, according to the custom of the monastery, went deep into the desert hoping to find someone living there who could benefit him.

He walked into the wilderness for twenty days and then, when he sang the Psalms of the Sixth Hour and made the usual prayers. Suddenly, to the right of the hill where he stood, he saw a human form. He was afraid, thinking that it might be a demonic apparition. Then he guarded himself with the Sign of the Cross, which removed his fear. He turned to the right and saw a form walking southward. The body was black from the blazing sunlight, and the faded short hair was white like a sheep's fleece. Abba Zosimas rejoiced, since he had not seen any living thing for many days.

The desert-dweller saw Zosimas approaching, and attempted to flee from him. Abba Zosimas, forgetting his age and fatigue, quickened his pace. When he was close enough to be heard, he called out, "Why do you flee from me, a sinful old man? Wait for me, for the love of God."

The stranger said to him, "Forgive me, Abba Zosimas, but I cannot turn and show my face to you. I am a woman, and as you see, I am naked. If you would grant the request of a sinful woman, throw me your cloak so I might cover my body, and then I can ask for your blessing."

Then Abba Zosimas was terrified, realizing that she could not have called him by name unless she possessed spiritual insight.

Covered by the cloak, the ascetic turned to Zosimas: "Why do you want to speak with me, a sinful woman? What did you wish to learn from me, you who have not shrunk from such great labors?"

Abba Zosimas fell to the ground and asked for her blessing. She also bowed down before him, and for a long time they remained on the ground each asking the other to bless. Finally, the woman ascetic said: "Abba Zosimas, you must bless and pray, since you are honored with the grace of the priesthood. For many years you have stood before the holy altar, offering the Holy Gifts to the Lord."

These words frightened Saint Zosimas even more. With tears he said to her, "O Mother! It is clear that you live with God and are dead to this world. You have called me by name and recognized me as a priest, though you have never seen me before. The grace granted you is apparent, therefore bless me, for the Lord's sake."

Yielding finally to his entreaties, she said, "Blessed is God, Who cares for the salvation of men." Abba Zosimas replied, "Amen." Then they rose to their feet. The woman ascetic again said to the Elder, "Why have you come, Father, to me who am a sinner, bereft of every virtue? Apparently, the grace of the Holy Spirit has brought you to do me a service. But tell me first, Abba, how do the Christians live, how is the Church guided?"

Abba Zosimas answered her, "By your holy prayers God has granted the Church and us all a lasting peace. But fulfill my unworthy request, Mother, and pray for the whole world and for me a sinner, that my wanderings in the desert may not be useless."

The holy ascetic replied, "You, Abba Zosimas, as a priest, ought to pray for me and for all, for you are called to do this. However, since we must be obedient, I will do as you ask."

The saint turned toward the East, and raising her eyes to heaven and stretching out her hands, she began to pray in a whisper. She prayed so softly that Abba Zosimas could not hear her words. After a long time, the Elder looked up and saw her standing in the air more than a foot above the ground. Seeing this, Zosimas threw himself down on the ground, weeping and repeating, "Lord, have mercy!"

Then he was tempted by a thought. He wondered if she might not be a spirit, and if her prayer could be insincere. At that moment she turned around, lifted him from the ground and said, "Why do your thoughts confuse you, Abba Zosimas? I am not an apparition. I am a sinful and unworthy woman, though I am guarded by holy Baptism."

Then she made the Sign of the Cross and said, "May God protect us from the Evil One and his schemes, for fierce is his struggle against us." Seeing and hearing this, the Elder fell at her feet with tears saying, "I beseech you by Christ our God, do not conceal from me who you are and how you came into this desert. Tell me everything, so that the wondrous works of God may be revealed."

She replied, "It distresses me, Father, to speak to you about my shameless life. When you hear my story, you might flee from me, as if from a poisonous snake. But I shall tell you everything, Father, concealing nothing. However, I exhort you, cease not to pray for me a sinner, that I may find mercy on the Day of Judgment."

"I was born in Egypt and when I was twelve years old, I left my parents and went to Alexandria. There I lost my chastity and gave myself to unrestrained and insatiable sensuality. For more than seventeen years I lived like that

We would like to welcome all parish visitors and invite you to join us after the Liturgy for Coffee hour.

and I did it all for free. Do not think that I refused the money because I was rich. I lived in poverty and worked at spinning flax. To me, life consisted in the satisfaction of my fleshly lust.

“One summer I saw a crowd of people from Libya and Egypt heading toward the sea. They were on their way to Jerusalem for the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross. I also wanted to sail with them. Since I had no food or money, I offered my body in payment for my passage. And so I embarked on the ship.

“Now, Father, believe me, I am very amazed, that the sea tolerated my wantonness and fornication, that the earth did not open up its mouth and take me down alive into hell, because I had ensnared so many souls. I think that God was seeking my repentance. He did not desire the death of a sinner, but awaited my conversion.

“So I arrived in Jerusalem and spent all the days before the Feast living the same sort of life, and maybe even worse.

“When the holy Feast of the Exaltation of the Venerable Cross of the Lord arrived, I went about as before, looking for young men. At daybreak I saw that everyone was heading to the church, so I went along with the rest. When the hour of the Holy Elevation drew nigh, I was trying to enter into the church with all the people. With great effort I came almost to the doors, and attempted to squeeze inside. Although I stepped up to the threshold, it was as though some force held me back, preventing me from entering. I was brushed aside by the crowd, and found myself standing alone on the porch. I thought that perhaps this happened because of my womanly weakness. I worked my way into the crowd, and again I attempted to elbow people aside. However hard I tried, I could not enter. Just as my feet touched the church threshold, I was stopped. Others entered the church without difficulty, while I alone was not allowed in. This happened three or four times. Finally my strength was exhausted. I went off and stood in a corner of the church portico.

“Then I realized that it was my sins that prevented me from seeing the Life-Creating Wood. The grace of the Lord then touched my heart. I wept and lamented, and I began to beat my breast. Sighing from the depths of my heart, I saw above me an icon of the Most Holy Theotokos. Turning to Her, I prayed: ‘O Lady Virgin, who gave birth in the flesh to God the Word! I know that I am unworthy to look upon your icon. I rightly inspire hatred and disgust before your purity, but I know also that God became Man in order to call sinners to repentance. Help me, O All-Pure One. Let me enter the church. Allow me to behold the Wood upon which the Lord was crucified in the flesh, shedding His Blood for the redemption of sinners, and also for me. Be my witness before Your Son that I will never defile my body again with the impurity of fornication. As soon as I have seen the Cross of your Son, I will renounce the world, and go wherever you lead me.’

“After I had spoken, I felt confidence in the compassion of the Mother of God, and left the spot where I had been praying. I joined those entering the church, and no one pushed me back or prevented me from entering. I went on in fear and trembling, and entered the holy place.

“Thus I also saw the Mysteries of God, and how God accepts the penitent. I fell to the holy ground and kissed it. Then I hastened again to stand before the icon of the Mother of God, where I had given my vow. Bending my knees before the Virgin Theotokos, I prayed:

‘O Lady, you have not rejected my prayer as unworthy. Glory be to God, Who accepts the repentance of sinners. It is time for me to fulfill my vow, which you witnessed. Therefore, O Lady, guide me on the path of repentance.’

“Then I heard a voice from on high: ‘If you cross the Jordan, you will find glorious rest.’

“I immediately believed that this voice was meant for me, and I cried out to the Mother of God: ‘O Lady, do not forsake me!’

“Then I left the church portico and started on my journey. A certain man gave me three coins as I was leaving the church. With them I bought three loaves of bread, and asked the bread merchant the way to the Jordan.

“It was nine o’clock when I saw the Cross. At sunset I reached the church of Saint John the Baptist on the banks of the Jordan. After praying in the church, I went down to the Jordan and washed my face and hands in its water. Then in this same temple of Saint John the Forerunner I received the Life-Creating Mysteries of Christ. Then I ate half of one of my loaves of bread, drank water from the holy Jordan, and slept there that night on the ground. In the morning I found a small boat and crossed the river to the opposite shore. Again I prayed that the Mother of God would lead me where She wished. Then I found myself in this desert.”

Abba Zosimas asked her, “How many years have passed since you began to live in the desert?”

“I think,” she replied, “it is forty-seven years since I came from the Holy City.”

Abba Zosimas again asked, “What food do you find here, Mother?”

And she said, “I had with me two and a half loaves of bread when I crossed the Jordan. Soon they dried out and hardened. Eating a little at a time, I finished them after a few years.”

Again Abba Zosimas asked, “Is it possible you have survived for so many years without sickness, and without suffering in any way from such a complete change?”

We would like to welcome all parish visitors and invite you to join us after the Liturgy for Coffee hour.

“Believe me, Abba Zosimas,” the woman said, “I spent seventeen years in this wilderness [after she had spent seventeen years in immorality], fighting wild beasts: mad desires and passions. When I began to eat bread, I thought of the meat and fish which I had in abundance in Egypt. I also missed the wine that I loved so much when I was in the world, while here I did not even have water. I suffered from thirst and hunger. I also had a mad desire for lewd songs. I seemed to hear them, disturbing my heart and my hearing. Weeping and striking myself on the breast, I remembered the vow I had made. At last I beheld a radiant Light shining on me from everywhere. After a violent tempest, a lasting calm ensued.

“Abba, how shall I tell you of the thoughts that urged me on to fornication? A fire seemed to burn within me, awakening in me the desire for embraces. Then I would throw myself to the ground and water it with my tears. I seemed to see the Most Holy Virgin before me, and She seemed to threaten me for not keeping my vow. I lay face downward day and night upon the ground, and would not get up until that blessed Light encircled me, dispelling the evil thoughts that troubled me.

“Thus I lived in this wilderness for the first seventeen years. Darkness after darkness, misery after misery stood about me, a sinner. But from that time until now the Mother of God helps me in everything.”

Abba Zosimas again inquired, “How is it that you require neither food, nor clothing?”

She answered, “After finishing my bread, I lived on herbs and the things one finds in the desert. The clothes I had when I crossed over the Jordan became torn and fell apart. I suffered both from the summer heat, when the blazing heat fell upon me, and from the winter cold, when I shivered from the frost. Many times I fell down upon the earth, as though dead. I struggled with various afflictions and temptations. But from that time until the present day, the power of God has guarded my sinful soul and humble body. I was fed and clothed by the all-powerful word of God, since man does not live by bread alone, but by every word proceeding from the mouth of God (Dt 8:3, Mt.4:4, Luke 4:4), and those who have put off the old man (Col 3:9) have no refuge, hiding themselves in the clefts of the rocks (Job 24:8, Heb 11:38). When I remember from what evil and from what sins the Lord delivered me, I have imperishable food for salvation.”

When Abba Zosimas heard that the holy ascetic quoted the Holy Scripture from memory, from the Books of Moses and Job and from the Psalms of David, he then asked the woman, “Mother, have you read the Psalms and other books?”

She smiled at hearing this question, and answered, “Believe me, I have seen no human face but yours from the time that I crossed over the Jordan. I never learned from books. I have never heard anyone read or sing from them. Perhaps the Word of God, which is alive and acting, teaches man knowledge by itself (Col 3:16, 1 Thess 2:13). This is the end of my story. As I asked when I began, I beg you for the sake of the Incarnate Word of God, holy Abba, pray for me, a sinner.

“Furthermore, I beg you, for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior, tell no one what you have heard from me, until God takes me from this earth. Next year, during Great Lent, do not cross the Jordan, as is the custom of your monastery.”

Again Abba Zosimas was amazed, that the practice of his monastery was known to the holy woman ascetic, although he had not said anything to her about this.

“Remain at the monastery,” the woman continued. “Even if you try to leave the monastery, you will not be able to do so. On Great and Holy Thursday, the day of the Lord’s Last Supper, place the Life-Creating Body and Blood of Christ our God in a holy vessel, and bring it to me. Await me on this side of the Jordan, at the edge of the desert, so that I may receive the Holy Mysteries. And say to Abba John, the igumen of your community, ‘Look to yourself and your brothers (1 Tim 4:16), for there is much that needs correction.’ Do not say this to him now, but when the Lord shall indicate.”

Asking for his prayers, the woman turned and vanished into the depths of the desert.

For a whole year Elder Zosimas remained silent, not daring to reveal to anyone what he had seen, and he prayed that the Lord would grant him to see the holy ascetic once more.

When the first week of Great Lent came again, Saint Zosimas was obliged to remain at the monastery because of sickness. Then he remembered the woman’s prophetic words that he would not be able to leave the monastery. After several days went by, Saint Zosimas was healed of his infirmity, but he remained at the monastery until Holy Week.

On Holy Thursday, Abba Zosimas did what he had been ordered to do. He placed some of the Body and Blood of Christ into a chalice, and some food in a small basket. Then he left the monastery and went to the Jordan and waited for the ascetic. The saint seemed tardy, and Abba Zosimas prayed that God would permit him to see the holy woman.

Finally, he saw her standing on the far side of the river. Rejoicing, Saint Zosimas got up and glorified God. Then he wondered how she could cross the Jordan without a boat. She made the Sign of the Cross over the water,

We would like to welcome all parish visitors and invite you to join us after the Liturgy for Coffee hour.

then she walked on the water and crossed the Jordan. Abba Zosimas saw her in the moonlight, walking toward him. When the Elder wanted to make prostration before her, she forbade him, crying out, "What are you doing, Abba? You are a priest and you carry the Holy Mysteries of God."

Reaching the shore, she said to Abba Zosimas, "Bless me, Father." He answered her with trembling, astonished at what he had seen. "Truly God did not lie when he promised that those who purify themselves will be like Him. Glory to You, O Christ our God, for showing me through your holy servant, how far I am from perfection."

The woman asked him to recite both the Creed and the "Our Father." When the prayers were finished, she partook of the Holy Mysteries of Christ. Then she raised her hands to the heavens and said, "Lord, now let Your servant depart in peace, for my eyes have seen Your salvation."

The saint turned to the Elder and said, "Please, Abba, fulfill another request. Go now to your monastery, and in a year's time come to the place where we first time spoke."

He said, "If only it were possible for me to follow you and always see your holy face!"

She replied, "For the Lord's sake, pray for me and remember my wretchedness."

Again she made the Sign of the Cross over the Jordan, and walked over the water as before, and disappeared into the desert. Zosimas returned to the monastery with joy and terror, reproaching himself because he had not asked the saint's name. He hoped to do so the following year.

A year passed, and Abba Zosimas went into the desert. He reached the place where he first saw the holy woman ascetic. She lay dead, with arms folded on her bosom, and her face was turned to the east. Abba Zosimas washed her feet with his tears and kissed them, not daring to touch anything else. For a long while he wept over her and sang the customary Psalms, and said the funeral prayers. He began to wonder whether the saint would want him to bury her or not. Hardly had he thought this, when he saw something written on the ground near her head: "Abba Zosimas, bury on this spot the body of humble Mary. Return to dust what is dust. Pray to the Lord for me. I reposed on the first day of April, on the very night of the saving Passion of Christ, after partaking of the Mystical Supper."

Reading this note, Abba Zosimas was glad to learn her name. He then realized that Saint Mary, after receiving the Holy Mysteries from his hand, was transported instantaneously to the place where she died, though it had taken him twenty days to travel that distance.

Glorifying God, Abba Zosimas said to himself, "It is time to do what she asks. But how can I dig a grave, with nothing in my hands?" Then he saw a small piece of wood left by some traveler. He picked it up and began to dig. The ground was hard and dry, and he could not dig it. Looking up, Abba Zosimas saw an enormous lion standing by the saint's body and licking her feet. Fear gripped the Elder, but he guarded himself with the Sign of the Cross, believing that he would remain unharmed through the prayers of the holy woman ascetic. Then the lion came close to the Elder, showing its friendliness with every movement. Abba Zosimas commanded the lion to dig the grave, in order to bury Saint Mary's body. At his words, the lion dug a hole deep enough to bury the body. Then each went his own way. The lion went into the desert, and Abba Zosimas returned to the monastery, blessing and praising Christ our God.

Arriving at the monastery, Abba Zosimas related to the monks and the igumen, what he had seen and heard from Saint Mary. All were astonished, hearing about the miracles of God. They always remembered Saint Mary with faith and love on the day of her repose.

Abba John, the igumen of the monastery, heeded the words of Saint Mary, and with the help of God corrected the things that were wrong at the monastery. Abba Zosimas lived a God-pleasing life at the monastery, reaching nearly a hundred years of age. There he finished his temporal life, and passed into life eternal.

The monks passed on the life of Saint Mary of Egypt by word of mouth without writing it down.

"I however," says Saint Sophronius of Jerusalem (March 11), "wrote down the Life of Saint Mary of Egypt as I heard it from the holy Fathers. I have recorded everything, putting the truth above all else."

"May God, Who works great miracles and bestows gifts on all who turn to Him in faith, reward those who hear or read this account, and those who copy it. May he grant them a blessed portion together with Saint Mary of Egypt and with all the saints who have pleased God by their pious thoughts and works. Let us give glory to God, the Eternal King, that we may find mercy on the Day of Judgment through our Lord Jesus Christ, to Whom is due all glory, honor, majesty and worship together with the Unoriginate Father, and the Most Holy and Life-Creating Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen."

We would like to welcome all parish visitors and invite you to join us after the Liturgy for Coffee hour.



Venerable Euthymius of Suzdal

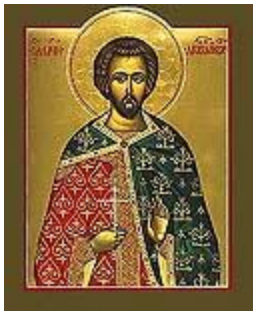
Saint Euthymius of Suzdal was born in the year 1316 at Nizhni-Novgorod. From early childhood he was taught his letters and received a spiritual upbringing. He received monastic tonsure at the Nizhegorod Caves monastery under its founder, Saint Dionysius (later the Archbishop of Suzdal, commemorated June 26 and October 15).

The ascetic struggles of Saint Euthymius were so great that Saint Dionysius advised him to lessen them. In 1352 Prince Boris of Suzdal sought to establish a men's monastery in his city, and he requested the Nizhegorod Caves monastery to send a monk to establish the monastery. The choice of the saintly igumen fell upon Saint Euthymius.

After the arrival of Saint Euthymius in the northern part of the city beyond the Kamenka River, Saint John of Suzdal (October 15) set up a cross on the site of the future monastery cathedral before a tremendous crowd of people. The prince himself began to dig the ground for the foundation, and Saint Euthymius made three grave stones for himself, vowing to remain in the new monastery until the very end of his life.

So, the the Savior-Euthymius monastery was founded, where soon more than three hundred monks gathered under the guidance of the saint. The monastery adopted the cenobitic rule. The saint insisted that each of the monks be prepared to fulfill whatever obedience they were given. Saint Euthymius went often to the Trinity-Sergiev monastery to Saint Sergius of Radonezh (September 25 and July 5). Saint Euthymius was a strict ascetic and a great man of prayer. He toiled incessantly for the benefit of all the brethren. Saint Euthymius died on April 1, 1404.

On July 4, 1507 while a foundation trench was being dug for a new cathedral church, his incorrupt relics were uncovered. The saint was glorified at a Council in 1549.



Martyr Abraham of Bulgaria

The Holy Martyr Abraham the Bulgar, Vladimir Wonderworker, lived during the thirteenth century, and was descended from the Kamska Bulgars and brought up as a Moslem. He was good and kindly towards the destitute, and when the Lord enlightened him with the light of reason, he accepted Christianity.

In the city of Bolgara, on the lower stretches of the Volga, Saint Abraham began to preach to his fellow countrymen about the true God. They seized him and tried to force him to renounce Christ, but the saint remained firm in his confession. They tortured the martyr fiercely and for a long while, but he endured everything with unshakable patience.

On April 1, 1229 they quartered the holy Martyr Abraham, and then cut off his venerable head. Russian Christians living in the city buried the saint's body in the Christian cemetery. On March 6, 1230, the relics of Saint Abraham were transferred by the Great Prince Saint George Vsevolodovich of Vladimir (February 4) to the Dormition cathedral of the Knyagin (Princess) monastery. His memory began to be celebrated from that time.



Venerable Gerontius the Canonarch of the Kiev Far Caves

Saint Gerontius lived during the fourteenth century. He was a monk of the Kiev Caves Monastery and fulfilled the obedience of canonarch (leader of church singing). He spent all his life at the monastery, in ascetic deeds of abstinence, obedience, and prayer.

Saint Gerontius was buried in the Far Caves. His memory is celebrated also together with the Synaxis of the Saints of the Far Caves, on August 28.

Venerable Macarius the Abbot of Pelecete

Saint Macarius was born at Constantinople in 785. While still a child, he lost his parents. The saint fervently read the Scriptures and came to realize that earthly things are temporary and perishable, and that heavenly things are permanent and imperishable. Therefore, he decided to devote his life entirely to God. He entered the Pelecete monastery in Bithynia, where at the time the igumen was the renowned ascetic, Saint Hilarion (March 28).

After the death of Saint Hilarion, Saint Macarius was unanimously chosen as igumen by the brethren. During the reign of the Byzantine Emperors Leo V the Armenian (813-820) and Michael II the Stammerer (820-829), Saint Macarius suffered as a confessor for the veneration of holy icons. He was sent to the island of Aphousia, where he died in about the year 830.

We would like to welcome all parish visitors and invite you to join us after the Liturgy for Coffee hour.

Martyrs Gerontius and Basilides

The Martyrs Gerontius and Basilides suffered martyrdom for Christ in the third century. They were beheaded by the sword.



St. John Shavteli of Salosi, Bishop of Gaenati, Georgia and St. Eulogius of Salosi, the Prophet and Fool-for-Christ

The great Georgian hymnographer, philosopher, and orator Saint John of Shavta labored in the 12th and 13th centuries, during the reign of the holy queen Tamar. Few details of his life have been preserved, but we know that he received his education at Gelati Academy, where he studied theology, ancient and Arabic history, philosophy, and literature. He was later tonsured a monk and labored at Vardzia Monastery.

When the Georgian army under the command of Queen Tamar's husband, Davit Soslan, entered into battle (The Battle of Basiani (ca. 1203)) with the sultan Rukn al-Din, Queen Tamar journeyed to Odzrkhe Monastery to pray for help. Catholicos Tevdore of Kartli and many hierarchs and monastics accompanied her there. Among them, Saint John of Shavta stood out as a wise theologian and philosopher and a brilliant hymnographer.

During the Liturgy at Odzrkhe Monastery a miracle occurred: endowed by God with the gift of prophecy, Saint Eulogius the Fool for-Christ fell to his knees, lifted his hands to the heavens and cried out: "Glory to God! Almighty Christ!...Do not fear the Persians, but rather depart in peace, for the mercy of God has descended upon the house of Tamar!"

Eulogius's words were clearly a divine revelation. Saint John of Shavta turned to Queen Tamar, rejoicing, "Your Highness! The Almighty has made known to us our victory in the war from the lips of a fool-for-Christ!" Eulogius confided his secret to Saint John: disguised as a fool, he had been concealing his God-given gift. But now it seemed that the gift would become apparent to all, so Eulogius quickly disappeared out of sight to escape the people's attention.

Saint John of Shavta composed his "Hymns to the Theotokos of Vardzia" in thanksgiving for Georgia's victory in the Battle of Basiani. He is also recognized as the composer of "Abdul-Messiah," (Abdul-Messiah: servant of Christ) a famous ode to the holy queen Tamar.

Our Holy Father John of Shavta lived to an advanced age and was canonized soon after his repose.

Venerable Barsanuphius of Optina

Paul I. Plikhanov was born in the city of Samara on July 5, 1845, the son of John and Natalia Plikhanov. His mother died in childbirth, and his father later remarried so that his son would have a mother. Although his stepmother was very strict, she was a real mother to him, and he loved her very much.

As a descendant of the Orenburg Cossacks, Paul was enrolled in the Polotsk Cadet Corps. He completed his studies at the Orenburg Military School and received an officer's commission. He later graduated from the Petersburg Cossack Staff Officers' School, and also served at the headquarters of the Kazan military district and eventually rose to the rank of colonel.

Once, as he was sick with pneumonia, Paul sensed that he was about to die. He asked his orderly to read the Gospel to him, and passed out. Then he had a vision in which the heavens seemed to open, and he was afraid because of the great light. His whole sinful life passed before him, and he was overcome with repentance. A voice told him he should go to Optina Monastery, but the doctors did not think he would recover. His health did improve, however, and the colonel visited Optina. In August 1889 the Elder of the Monastery was Saint Ambrose (October 10), who told Paul to set his worldly affairs in order. Two years later, Saint Ambrose blessed him to cut all ties to the world and told him to enter Optina within three months.

It was not easy for the colonel to resign his commission within the specified three month period, because obstacles were placed in his way. In fact, he was offered a promotion to the rank of general, and was asked to delay his retirement. Some people even tried to arrange a marriage for him, laughing at his intention to go to the monastery. Only his stepmother was happy that he wished to become a monk. On the very last day of the three months he concluded his affairs and arrived at Optina. However, Saint Ambrose was already laid out in his coffin in the church.

Saint Anatole I (January 25) succeeded Father Ambrose as Elder, and he assigned Paul to Hieromonk Nectarius (April 29) as his cell attendant. He was accepted as a novice in 1892, and tonsured as a rassophore in 1893. Over the next ten years he advanced through the various stages of monastic life, including ordination as deacon (1902), and as priest (1903). The monk Paul was secretly tonsured into the mantiya in December of 1900 because of a serious

We would like to welcome all parish visitors and invite you to join us after the Liturgy for Coffee hour.

illness. When they asked him what name he wished to receive, he said it did not matter. They named him in honor of Saint Barsanuphius of Tver and Kazan (April 11). Although he recovered, they did not give him the mantiya until December of 1902 after the Liturgy when it was revealed that he had been tonsured on his sickbed.

On September 1, 1903 Father Barsanuphius was appointed to assist Elder Joseph, the skete Superior, in the spiritual direction of the skete brethren and the sisters of the Shamordino convent.

At the beginning of the Russo-Japanese war in 1904, Father Barsanuphius was sent to the Far East as a military chaplain, where he ministered to wounded soldiers. The war ended in August 1905, and Saint Barsanuphius returned to Optina on November 1, 1905.

Since Elder Joseph had become too old and frail to administer the skete's affairs, Father Barsanuphius was appointed as Superior of the skete in his place. Father Barsanuphius soon reestablished order and discipline, paid off debts, repaired buildings, etc. As Superior, he combined strictness with paternal concern and tenderness for those under him.

Saint Barsanuphius, like the other Elders of Optina, possessed the gifts of clairvoyance and of healing people afflicted with physical and spiritual ailments. One of his spiritual sons, Father Innocent Pavlov, recalled his first Confession with the Elder. He became fearful because Father Barsanuphius seemed to know his innermost thoughts, reminding him of people and events which he had forgotten. The saint spoke gently and told him that it was God who had revealed to him these things about Father Innocent. "During my lifetime, do not tell anyone about what you are experiencing now," he said, "but you may speak of it after my death."

Saint Barsanuphius loved spiritual books, especially the Lives of the Saints. He often told people that those who read these Lives with faith benefit greatly from doing so. The answers to many of life's questions can be found by reading the Lives of the Saints, he said. They teach us how to overcome obstacles and difficulties, how to stand firm in our faith, and how to struggle against evil and emerge victorious. Although the Lives of the Saints were widely available, it saddened the Elder that more people did not read them.

Saint Barsanuphius commemorated many saints each day during his Rule of prayer, and this was not accidental. Each saint, he once explained, had some particular importance in his life. If, for example, some significant event took place, he would look to see which saints were commemorated on that day, then he would begin to commemorate them each day. Later he noticed that on their Feast Day, they would often deliver him from some danger or trouble. On December 17, 1891, the commemoration of the Prophet Daniel and the three holy youths, he left Kazan and never returned. That was the day he decided to leave the world, and Saint Barsanuphius felt that God had delivered him from a furnace of passions. Just as the three youths were delivered from the fiery furnace because they would not bow down before idols, the Elder always believed that he left the world unharmed because he refused to bow down before the idols of lust, pride, gluttony, etc.

By 1908, Saint Barsanuphius seemed to fall ill more frequently, and began to speak of his approaching death. In April of that year, someone sent him a package containing the Great Schema. Father Barsanuphius had long desired to be tonsured into the Great Schema before his death, but he had told no one of this except for the archimandrite. Therefore, he regarded this as a sign that he would soon die.

One night in July 1910, the Elder became so ill that he had to leave church during Vigil and return to his cell. The next morning, July 11, he was so weak that he could not sit up by himself. That evening he was tonsured into the Great Schema.

Father Barsanuphius began to recover, but there were new problems in the monastery. New monks came in from spiritually lax environments. They did not understand the ascetical nature of monasticism or the whole notion of eldership, and so they began to clamor for reform and change. They wanted to assume positions of authority, and to close the skete. Because of their complaints, Father Barsanuphius was removed from Optina and assigned as igumen of the Goluvinsky Monastery. When he arrived to take up his duties, Father Barsanuphius found the monastery in a state of physical and spiritual decline. Nevertheless, he did not lose heart, and soon the monastery began to revive. More people began to visit, once they heard that an Optina Elder had come to Goluvinsky, and the monastery's financial position also began to improve. However, the rebellious brethren caused him great sorrow, and he had to expel some of them.

At the beginning of 1913, Saint Barsanuphius became ill again and asked Metropolitan Macarius of Moscow for permission to retire to Optina, but that was not to be. He fell asleep in the Lord on April 1, and his body remained in the church of Golotvino until April 6 (which was also Lazarus Saturday). After the funeral, his body was placed on a train and sent to Optina for burial. The train arrived at Kozelsk Station on April 8, and the coffin was carried to Optina by clergy.

The Moscow Patriarchate authorized local veneration of the Optina Elders on June 13, 1996. The work of uncovering the relics of Saints Leonid, Macarius, Hilarion, Ambrose, Anatole I, Barsanuphius and Anatole II began on June 24/July 7, 1998 and was concluded the next day. However, because of the church Feasts (Nativity of Saint

We would like to welcome all parish visitors and invite you to join us after the Liturgy for Coffee hour.

John the Baptist, etc.) associated with the actual dates of the uncovering of the relics, Patriarch Alexey II designated June 27/July 10 as the date for commemorating this event. The relics of the holy Elders now rest in the new church of the Vladimir Icon of the Mother of God.

The Optina Elders were glorified by the Moscow Patriarchate for universal veneration on August 7, 2000.

Righteous Achaz (Ahaz)

No information available at this time.

GOSPEL AND EPISTLE READINGS

Prokeimenon, Tone 4:

Blessed is He that comes in the name of the Lord! / God is the Lord and has revealed Himself to us!

(Psalm 117:26-7)

vs. O give thanks to the Lord, for He is good; for His mercy endures forever! *(Psalm 117:1)*

Epistle Reading

The reading from the Epistle of the Holy Apostle Paul to the Philippians 4:4-9

Brethren, rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. Let all men know your forbearance. The Lord is at hand. Have no anxiety about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is gracious, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, do; and the God of peace will be with you.

Alleluia, Tone 1:

O sing to the Lord a new song, for He has done marvelous things! *(Psalm 97:1)*

vs. All the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God. *(Psalm 97:3)*

Gospel Reading

The Reading is from John 12:1-18

Six days before Passover, Jesus came to Bethany, where Lazaros was, whom Jesus had raised from the dead. There they made him a supper; Martha served, and Lazaros was one of those at table with him. Mary took a pound of costly ointment of pure nard and anointed the feet of Jesus and wiped his feet with her hair; and the house was filled with the fragrance of the ointment. But Judas Iscariot, one of his disciples (he who was to betray him), said "Why was this ointment not sold for three hundred denarii and given to the poor?" This he said, not that he cared for the poor but because he was a thief, and as he had the money box he used to take what was put into it. Jesus said, "Let her alone, let her keep it for the day of my burial. The poor you always have with you, but you do not always have me." When the great crowd of the Jews learned that he was there, they came, not only on account of Jesus but also to see Lazaros, whom he had raised from the dead. So the chief priests planned to put Lazaros also to death, because on account of him many of the Jews were going away and believing in Jesus. The next day a great crowd who had come to the feast heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem. So they took branches of palm trees and went out to meet him, crying, "Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel!" And Jesus found a young donkey and sat upon it; as it is written, "Fear not, daughter of Zion; behold, your king is coming, sitting on a donkey's colt!" His disciples did not understand this at first; but when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that this had been written of him and had been done to him. The crowd that had been with him when he called Lazaros out of the tomb and raised him from the dead bore witness. The reason why the crowd went to meet him was that they heard he had done this sign.

We would like to welcome all parish visitors and invite you to join us after the Liturgy for Coffee hour.

Hymn to the Theotokos:

God is the Lord and hath revealed Himself to us!
Celebrate the feast and come with gladness!
Let us magnify Christ with palms and branches,
singing: "Blessed is He that comes in the Name of the Lord, our Savior!"

Communion Hymn:

Blessed is He that comes in the Name of the Lord!
God is the Lord and has revealed Himself to us!
Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia!

Orthodox Quote of the Day

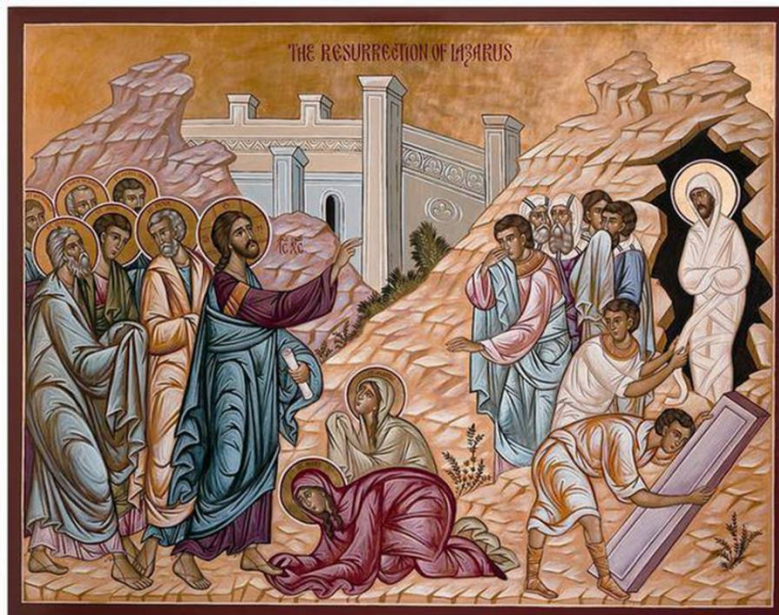
It is a trick of the demons to make us believe that we can only pray when external circumstances are favorable. We must pray all of the time.

Elder Sergei of Vanves

Elder Sergei of Vanves: Life & Teachings 97

He who at dinner has many different foods eats much and with pleasure, whereas he who uses every day the same food not only eats it without pleasure but sometimes perhaps even feels repelled by it. So it is in our state. In psalmody and prayer do not bind yourself, but do as much as the Lord gives you. Do not abandon reading and interior prayer either. Some of one and some of the other and so you will spend the day pleasing God. Our perfect fathers did not have a fixed rule, but during the course of the whole day they carried out their rule.

St. Barsanuphius the Great
On the Prayer of Jesus 56



We would like to welcome all parish visitors and invite you to join us after the Liturgy for Coffee hour.

PARISH NEWS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

There will be special collections for Paschal flowers today Sunday April 1st. Please be generous with your donations so that our church can be beautiful for Pascha.

LITURGICAL SCHEDULE

Sunday, April 1st

9:30 am: No Sunday School
9:40 am: Hours
10:00 am: Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom
After Communion: Sunday School pre-K - Grade 3

Tuesday, April 3rd

6:30 pm: Liturgy of Presanctified Gifts

Wednesday, April 4th

7:00 pm: Sacrament of Holy Unction – Healing Sacrament

Friday, April 6th

7:00 pm: Holy Friday Matins

Saturday, April 7th

11:30 pm: Holy Pascha Vigil (Nocturns, Matins, Divine liturgy)

Saturday, April 14th

6:30 pm: Vespers

Sunday, April 15th

9:30 am: Sunday School
9:40 am: Hours
10:00 am: Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom
After Communion: Sunday School pre-K - Grade 3

Request & Bulletin Sponsor: Use the sign-up sheet at the candle stand for the health of, eternal memory of or a Pannikhida for a loved one or friend will be remembered during Divine Liturgy for the day/week that you signed up for.

Memorial Candles: Candles can be purchased at the candle stand, suggested donation of \$10 for a large one.

Private Confessions: Can be heard a half hour before any service. See Father Matthew for other times.

General Confession: Will be at 9:45 am on the first Sunday of the month.

Receiving Holy Communion: Holy Communion is offered to those baptized Orthodox Christians who have prepared themselves for the reception of the Sacrament by prayer and fasting. Blessed Bread is available for all our visitors at the very end of the Divine Liturgy.

Pannikhida Service: The third Sunday of each month there will be a Pannikhida after Divine Liturgy. If you would like your loved ones to be remembered please give a list of names to Father Matthew before that Sunday for those to be remembered in the month.

Special Announcements for the bulletin can be submitted by E-Mail: OrthodoxChurchMotherOfGod@outlook.com

The Living Clean Group of Narcotics Anonymous meets every Friday from 8-9:15 pm downstairs in the community room.

The Grey Book Step Meeting Group of Narcotics Anonymous meets every Tuesday from 7-8:00 pm downstairs in the community room.

We would like to welcome all parish visitors and invite you to join us after the Liturgy for Coffee hour.



Daily Inspirations by Abbott Tryphon

Fermenting Faith

Being the leaven in a post-Christian era



As Christians in this post-Christian era, we must live with the knowledge that God still reigns, even though the evidence is to the contrary. In this post-Christian era, we are like exiles, but like the Jews who were in bondage under the Babylonians, we cannot live in the past, remembering only the time when society was Christian. Nor can we focus on critiquing the present secular age. Rather, we must become the leaven for restoring the faith of our neighbors.

We must energize the nation by being agents of love, mercy, beauty, and peace. We must become the reconciling force between the secular world, and God.

Even if our churches are closed for lack of membership, we must be as living repositories of the wisdom and grace of faith, bringing about, by our lives, the restoration of Christianity in this age of unbelief. We must show our neighbors what love looks like, and be that shining light of Christ in this age of darkness. We must not let this era change us, but we must change this era.



Daily Reflection

If You Believed, You Would See



“Then Jesus, deeply moved again, came to the tomb; it was a cave, and a stone lay upon it. Jesus said, ‘Take away the stone.’ Martha, the sister of the dead man, said to him, ‘Lord, by this time there will be an odor, for he has been dead four days.’ Jesus said to her, ‘Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?’ So they took away the stone. And Jesus lifted up his eyes and said, ‘Father, I thank you that you have heard me. I knew that you hear me always, but I have said this on account of the people standing by, that they may believe that you sent me.’ When he had said this, he cried with a loud voice, ‘Lazarus, come out.’ The dead man came out, his hands and feet bound with bandages, and his face wrapped with a cloth. Jesus said to them, ‘Unbind him, and let him go.’” (Jn 11: 38-44)

Martha’s faith, and consequently her spiritual vision, have been weakened by almost-inconsolable grief over her brother’s death. So she can’t “see” the point of the Lord’s words, “Take away the stone.” In fact she can’t “see” anything at all being accomplished by the Word of God, in her blinding, already-four-day-old grief. By this time, rather than “seeing” anything or anyone, she’s merely “smelling” something – the stench of death. Hence her quick objection to the Lord’s command, to take away the stone: “Lord, by this time there will be an odor...”

Let me try and open my eyes today, if I have been visited by grief, loss, rejection, or any other disappointment of the blinding, crushing kind. Because my Lord, the Lord of Surprises, can and does show me His “glory” in my immediate surroundings, when I have “the eyes to see”; the eyes of faith and gratitude, which let me let myself take away the “stone” (most often felt in the stomach), blocking me from new life, and a new way forward. Lord, help me see and do the next right thing today, as I hear You say to me, ever-so-simply, “Take away the stone.”