

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 and the Diocese of NY & NJ
V. Rev. Dr. Matthew Searfoorce, Rector

Sub-Deacon Edward Dawson
Parish Council President: Andrew Romanofsky

Sub-Deacon Vlashi
Parish Council Vice President: Holly Dawson



Sunday, April 24, 2016

Gospel: John 12:1-18

Palm Sunday

Epistle: Philippians 4:4-9

Entry of Our Lord into Jerusalem (Palm Sunday)



**Glory to
Jesus Christ!**

**Glory
Forever!**

*Entry of Our Lord into
Jerusalem (Palm
Sunday)*

*By raising Lazarus from the dead before Your passion, You did confirm the
Universal Resurrection, O Christ God! Like the children with the palms of victory,
We cry out to You, O Vanquisher of death; Hosanna in the Highest!
Blessed is He that comes in the Name of the Lord!*

Today's Commemorated Feasts and Saints

Entry of Our Lord into Jerusalem — Palm Sunday. Martyr Sabbas Stratelates ("the General") of Rome, and 70 soldiers with him (272). Ven. Savva and Aleksy the Recluse, of the Kiev Caves (Near Caves—13th c.). Martyrs Pasocrates and Valentine in Moesia (Bulgaria—228). Martyrs Eusebius, Neon, Leontius, Longinus, and others, at Nicomedia (303). Ven. Thomas the Fool, of Syria (6th c.). St. Elizabeth the Wonderworker of Constantinople (6th-8th c.). Ss. Iorest (1678) and Sava Brancovici (1683), Metropolitans of Ardeal and Confessors (Romania). Hieromartyr and Confessor Elijah (Ilie) the Wallachian (1657).

Prayer Requests

For Health of:

Father Matthew on his birthday; offered by his family.

Sylvia Bachinsky & Maria Bachinsky on their birthdays; offered by Steven.

His Grace, Bishop Matthias on the anniversary of his consecration; offered by Trudy.

Richard Dantinne, Sr. on his birthday on Pascha; offered by his family with love.

Emily on her baptism; offered by her family with love.

Liturgical Schedule:

Sunday, April 24th

9:30 am: Sunday School
9:40 am: Hours
10:00 am: Divine Liturgy

Tuesday, April 26th

6:30 pm: Presanctified
Liturgy/Potluck

Wednesday, April 27th

6:30 pm: Holy Unction

Friday, April 29th

7:00 pm: Matins Service

Saturday, April 30th

11:30 pm: Pascha Service
12:00 am: Resurrection Divine
Liturgy followed by Blessing
of Pascha Baskets

Sunday, May 1st

Pascha – No Church Service

Saturday, May 7th

6:30 pm: Vespers

Sunday, May 8th

9:30 am: Sunday School
9:40 am: Hours
10:00 am: Divine Liturgy

Bulletin Sponsors:

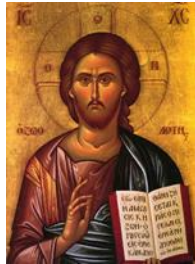
***Searfoorce Family, Steven
Bachinsky, Trudy Ellmore &
Dantinne Family***

Readings:



Epistle: 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.



Gospel: 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.



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 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 an 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



Bulletin Sponsors/Prayer Requests: 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, for a donation of \$10. Bulletin Sponsors/Prayer Requests will be remembered during Divine Liturgy for the day/week that you signed up for.

Candles/Memorial Candles: Candles may be purchased at the candle stand, suggested donation of \$10 for a large one and \$2 for a small one.

Private Confessions: Can be heard a half hour before any service. See Father Matthew for other times and **General Confession:** Will be at 9:45 am on the first Sunday of the month.

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



Orthodox Church of the Mother of God: Parish News

Sisterhood news: The Sisterhood of the Protection of the Mother of God will be sponsoring a Paschal basket raffle to be held today Sunday, April 24th.



NY/NJ Diocese News

Entry of Our Lord into Jerusalem (Palm Sunday)

*The Lord's entry into Jerusalem
Metropolitan Anthony of Sourozh
a sermon delivered on 30 March 1980*

In the Name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

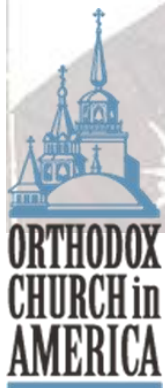
Today Christ enters the path not only of His sufferings but of that dreadful loneliness which enshrouds Him during all the days of Passion week. The loneliness begins with a misunderstanding; the people expect that the Lord's entry into Jerusalem will be the triumphant procession of a political leader, of a leader who will free his people from oppression, from slavery, from what they consider godlessness - because all paganism or idol-worship is a denial of the living God. The loneliness will develop further into the dreadful loneliness of not being understood even by His disciples. At the Last Supper when the Saviour talks to them for the last time, they will be in constant doubt as to the meaning of His words. And later when He goes into the Garden of Gethsemane before the fearful death that is facing Him, His closest disciples, Peter, John and James - whom He chose to go with Him, fall asleep, depressed, tired, hopeless. The culmination of this loneliness will be Christ's cry on the cross, *"My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken me?"* Abandoned by men, rejected by the people of Israel He encounters the extreme of forsakenness and dies without God, without men, alone, with only His love for God and His love for mankind, dying for its sake and for God's glory.

The beginning of Christ's Passion is today's triumphal procession. The people expected a king, a leader - and they found the Savior of their souls. Nothing embitters a person so much as a lost, a disappointed

hope; and that explains why people who could receive Him like that, who witnessed the raising of Lazarus, who saw Christ's miracles and heard His teaching, admired every word, who were ready to become His disciples as long as He brought victory, broke away from Him, turned their backs on Him and a few days later shouted, "*Crucify Him, crucify Him!*" And Christ spent all those days in loneliness, knowing what was in store for Him, abandoned by everyone except the Mother of God, who stood silently by, as She had done throughout her life, participating in His tragic ascent to the Cross; She who had accepted the Annunciation, the Good Tidings, but who also accepted in silence Simeon's prophecy that a sword would pierce her heart.

During the coming days we shall be not just remembering, but be present at Christ's Passion. We shall be part of the crowd surrounding Christ and the disciples and the Mother of God. As we hear the Gospel readings, as we listen to the prayers of the Church, as one image after another of these days of the Passion passes before our eyes, let each one of us ask himself the question, "*Where do I stand, who am I in this crowd? A Pharisee? A Scribe? A traitor, a coward? Who? Or do I stand among the Apostles?*" But they too were overcome by fear. Peter denied Him thrice, Judas betrayed Him, John, James and Peter went to sleep just when Christ most needed human love and support; the other disciples fled; no one remained except John and the Mother of God, those who were bound to Him by the kind of love which fears nothing and is ready to share in everything.

Once more let us ask ourselves who we are and where we stand, what our position in this crowd is. Do we stand with hope, or despair, or what? And if we stand with indifference, we too are part of that terrifying crowd that surrounded Christ, shuffling, listening, and then going away; as we shall go away from church. The Crucifix will be standing here on Thursday and we shall be reading the Gospel about the Cross, the Crucifixion and death - and then what will happen? The Cross will remain standing, but we shall go away for a rest, go home to have supper, to sleep, to prepare for the fatigues of the next day. And during this time Christ is on the Cross, Christ is in the tomb. How awful it is that, like the disciples in their day, we are not able to spend one night, one hour with Him. Let us think about this, and if we are incapable of doing anything, let us at least realize who we are and where we stand, and at the final hour turn to Christ with the cry, the appeal of the thief, "*Remember me, Lord, in Thy Kingdom!*" Amen.



Orthodox Church in America (OCA) News

Ten Things As We Begin Holy Week

[by Father Theophan Whitfield]

On the weekend of Palm Sunday, we begin the celebration of Holy Week—a 10-day long procession to the Cross, to the tomb, and to the Resurrection. And as we get ready, our Lord extends the same invitation to us as He extended to James and John. To all of us who wish to see His glory, who desire to be by His side at Pascha, Jesus first says to you and to me, "but are you able and willing to drink the cup that I drink from? Are you able to walk with me through Holy Week? Are you willing to be by my side, and to carry my Cross with me?"

I hope your answer is yes. I hope that Pascha is not just a Sunday on which we show up, having given no thought to Christ on the days of Holy Week.

To help us prepare — to help us take up and drink from the Lord's same cup — I wanted to share a list of 10 things to do during Holy Week. These are 10 recommendations for how to be baptized with the same baptism with which our Lord is baptized.

(1) Go to as many services as you can. Most parishes offer a large number—usually at least two each

day. And if you can't go to every service, set aside time to read prayerfully through those you cannot attend. It is through worship that we return and unite ourselves to Christ. The services of Holy Week are not just memory exercises. Holy Week is a single, unbroken Liturgy that over 10 days invites us to participate in the saving love of Jesus Christ, not just to remember some events from long ago. The love which Jesus shows is real, it is now, and we are invited through worship to receive it.

Does it seem unreasonable to attend Church so much in a single week? Of course it does! But Christ's love for us is extreme and intense. And so we return that love during Holy Week in a way that is beyond reason!

(2) Intensify your fasting. Each person is called to fast as he or she is able. Some are able to fast more, some less. During Holy Week, each of us should increase the intensity of the fast. Think about how you have followed the fast up to this point. During Holy Week, continue what you do, and then do a little bit more. Do you fast just a few days a week? Increase the number of your fasting days. Are you fasting from meat only? Consider fasting from dairy as well. Consider eating smaller meals each time. For some, it may be possible to eat only two small meals a day rather than three. Holy Week is a time in which we should increase our hunger for Christ, and physical hunger is one way to do so. Physical hunger reminds us that we need what God offers, and fasting helps us to focus on the love of Christ. Fasting is hard, but remember the good gift which waits for us at the Paschal Liturgy of the Resurrection — the good gift of Christ Himself!

(3) Create silence. Disconnect entirely from your cell phone, e-mail, internet usage and especially social media. (If any of this is needed for work or school, designate a window of usage of no more than a few hours.) Do not watch TV, or listen to the radio. Cancel all lessons, sports, and social activities. It's only for one week. The world will still be there after Pascha. When we create silence in this way, we give ourselves the space and opportunity to be drawn by Christ more deeply into His words and actions during Holy Week. We remove some of the man-made barriers that separate us from “drinking from his cup” (Mark 10:38). And if we do not create silence, then the noise of this world will easily overwhelm the “still small voice” through which the Holy Spirit speaks (1 Kings 19:12). To hear the voice of Christ, we have to silence the relentless cascade of screed and distraction we otherwise allow the world to pump full force into our hearts and minds.

(4) Create prayer. Turn on some church music. In particular, listen to the hymns of Holy Week. And learn something about each hymn you hear. On what day do we sing this hymn? During which service? What is the place and purpose of this hymn? The hymns of Holy Week create holy echoes that help to connect our worship with the rest of daily life. Singing “Behold the Bridegroom” at the services which begin Holy Week is good, but hearing and singing the same hymn while driving, walking, or cleaning the house is even better. Doing so, we allow the prayer of the Church to become the prayer of everyday life.

(5) Be still. Set aside time each day to sit quietly in front of an icon of Christ, about 20-30 minutes. Light a candle, say a short prayer, and then simply wait in silence for the Lord to speak a word, or to bestow a deeper sense of His presence. Being silent is a way of saying to God, “I am here. And I wait on no other than You. Visit me in my smallness.” Stillness during Holy Week is a good practice for the experience of Great and Holy Friday and Saturday. The most eloquent word ever spoken is the silence of our dead Savior while hanging on the Cross and while lying in the tomb. His silence says everything. The stillness of His death is the great action that redeems and sanctifies all the world. His silence on the Cross shouts down hell. His stillness in the tomb explodes the realm of the dead and bestows life on all. When we practice stillness and silence during Holy Week, we are preparing to unite our silence to Christ's. We are preparing to die with our Savior... so that we too might be raised to new life!

(6) Always be with Christ. Occupy your mind as often as you can with a short prayer. If you do not already have the habit of praying the Jesus Prayer, Holy Week is a great time to begin: “O Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me a sinner.” This prayer increases our awareness of the nearness of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. It reminds us that nothing can ever separate us from the love of God. Christ is always with us, and through continual prayer, we work to do the same — to always be with our Lord Who loves and strengthens us.

(7) Read a Gospel. Set aside time each day to read several chapters from either Matthew, Mark, or Luke. (We save John for after Pascha!) And remember that in the Gospels, we do not find words about Christ, we find words from Christ. Each verse of Holy Scripture is a word spoken directly to you by the raised and glorified Lord. Each word is a word for now, each word is a new word that you have never received before. Enjoy the gift! Jesus wants to give it to you!

(8) Seek forgiveness and healing. Chances are, each of us has at least a small handful of relationships in need of healing. During Holy Week, work for that healing. Admit your mistakes, and forgive the mistakes made by others. Offer yourself in love to at least one other person from whom you are estranged. Make a phone call, send a letter or e-mail — you have a blessing to use e-mail in this one case! — or schedule a coffee date. Remember how much you love this person, and remember that we were created to live in peace and joy with one another. Christ’s love for us is ENORMOUS compare to the pettiness we so often hold on to. And if you have been deeply harmed by another person, seek help! Reach out to someone — your spouse, another family member or friend, your priest — and ask for guidance. Search through prayer, fasting, and honest communication for a way forward. As they say, holding onto anger (or hatred, or resentment, or vengefulness) is like swallowing poison and expecting someone else to die. Seek release from what possesses. Enjoy the lightness of a relationship that has been healed and restored.

(9) Call someone who is sick or lonely. Visit them if you can. Share yourself with someone who needs you. Our parishes, and our neighborhoods are filled with people who are dying of loneliness and isolation. Extend yourself and give them the gift of human presence. One of the great themes of Holy Week is abandonment — how our Lord was abandoned by just about everyone, including it seems by His own Father. As we seek to unite ourselves to Christ through prayer and worship during Holy Week, may we not at the same time abandon those who need us. To be united to Christ, we must at the same time strengthen our solidarity with all those around us. We are part of the mystical body of Christ, and we are called to a life of unity and communion with one another.

(10) Think about Bright Week and beyond! With Pascha comes the true light that enlightens the whole world and each person in it. As we unite ourselves to Christ, the radiance of the Resurrection changes everything. The week after Pascha is truly a Bright Week — the Resurrection colors all with brilliance and beauty. Nothing should ever be the same. Let this Holy Week be a launching pad into the rest of life. Having united ourselves to Christ in both death and resurrection — having lived out our baptism through the celebration of Holy Week — we should get ready to proclaim the good news in all that we do. May we remember that every Sunday is a “little Pascha” and that each time we gather to celebrate the Liturgy we proclaim Christ’s death and we confess His Resurrection. And if every Sunday is a little Pascha, then every week is a little Holy Week. Each day of the year is a day on which we give thanks for the Holy Mysteries we last received and look forward to being received by Christ once again at the life-giving chalice. Holy Week and Pascha occur once a year, but they are the rule, not the exception. Holy Week and Pascha are the models for every week of the year. Jesus Christ touches all of time through the Cross, and all of time collapses into the eternal now of His divine love. May we live all of life in the light of the Resurrection!



Life in Kenya: Teaching, More Teaching, and Some Writing too!

by Dr. William Black (4/11/2016)

Today is Thursday, so I was up early to make the drive to St. Paul's University near Limuru before the morning traffic totally clogged Naivasha Road, the main road out of our part of town. Normally I teach two Master's-level courses at St. Paul's on Thursday mornings – a course on the Atonement and another on Theology and Public Life. But I arrived today to discover that both of my students had illnesses in their families, which meant they couldn't make it to class. Before I got too excited about having a FULL MORNING open up before my eyes, I got an e-mail from a former colleague at Africa International University all but begging me to serve as the external examiner for two Master's theses. I am about to agree to help out, even though I know what this entails, and so even though the day is still young, I am already questioning my sanity. So I'm beginning to see how my "free" morning is about to go.

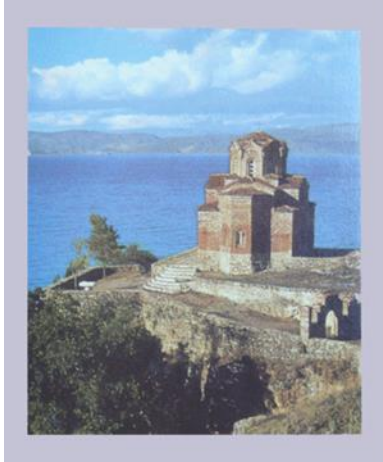
Yesterday (Wednesday) at the Orthodox Seminary, I taught the third-year students a two-hour class on the global Christian missionary movement. But rather than overwhelm them with dates and names which will not get remembered, I tried instead to help them understand the motives for missions. Among other things, this involved doing a Bible study of Romans 12:5-15, during which I got the strong impression that my students had never done a Bible study before. This made me realize how fortunate I have been to have such a strong grounding in the Scriptures. My Orthodox students are constantly reading the Scriptures, but mostly in liturgical contexts. In fact, we Orthodox hear far more Scripture in any given service than any Protestant church I was ever a part of. But in terms of understanding the Scriptures and being able to make use of the Scriptures, I am realizing that we Kenyan Orthodox have some things to learn. I taught the concept of inductive Bible Study for more than three decades and led more than thirty Bible studies during my time as a Protestant leader and pastor. But this sort of intentional study of the Scriptures is an entirely new concept here. I do not yet know what to do with this. But I wouldn't be surprised if, with His Eminence's blessing, we might start a weekly Bible study here.

If this were all, it would certainly be enough. But I also presented a paper in mid-March at an academic conference on the problem of dependency in Kenyan churches. I was asked to give a presentation on Orthodox Spirituality at a St. Paul's faculty fellowship and another presentation on Women in Ministry at a staff fellowship at the Orthodox Seminary. And then a week or so ago I was asked to preach at St. Paul's chapel on the day the Orthodox students were given responsibility for the chapel service.

And I've written a book on stewardship and the churches in Kenya. I go over how Jesus, the apostles, and the early Church through the time of St. John Chrysostom dealt with money, offerings, and giving. I cover the contemporary issues of dependency and the prosperity heresy, as well as misguided efforts to impose "tithing" as a solution for a church's financial needs. I offer stewardship as the New Testament and early Church model of handling money and possessions, and I give examples of Kenyan churches who are doing money well and others that are missing the mark. Please pray with me that God might use this material to help His people here. Every church I am aware of, Orthodox or otherwise, struggles with money. And nobody for more than 20 years has addressed this in a systematic, useful way. I have submitted my manuscript to a Roman Catholic publisher, Pauline, and am waiting to hear from them. If they aren't interested, I will try with one of the Protestant presses. I want this to be published here in Kenya so that the price will be lower and therefore the book will be more accessible to priests, pastors, and leaders across the country.

So I've been busy. Some days I feel like it's too much and that I'm not doing anything particularly well. But I'm trying to be a good steward of the opportunity the Lord has given me and that you, through your prayers and your financial provision, are making possible.

To learn more about, or support the work of, Dr. William Black please visit:
<http://www.ocmc.org/DrWilliamBlack>.



Prayers by the Lake, St. Nikolai Velimirovich, LIV:

O Son of life, fill the earth of my body and Soul with Your life, so that I may have something with which to appear among the living angels.

Without Your life I would be unable to breathe the air that the angels breathe, or to eat the bread that angels eat. I would again be an exile outside the gates of the heavenly kingdom, before which gates even now I lie like a paralytic.

The world lures me to its bread, and then stones my soul.

It lures me to a fish, and then stones my heart.

It lures me to light, and then shrouds my mind in darkness.

I do not despise one who is poor, but the world has become despicable to me; because, though it is poor, it pretends to be rich.

Neither do I despise one who is selfish, but the world has become despicable to me; because, though it is selfish, it pretends to be generous. Nor do I despise one who is insane, but the world has become despicable to me; because, though it is insane, it pretends to be sane. Nor do I despise one who is sick, but the world has become despicable to me; because, though tuberculous, it intentionally contaminates the water of the healthy. I despise the imposter and the charlatan, O Lord, who bury my life with earth while speaking continuously to me about heaven.

There was once a rich shopkeeper who died. His shop and its goods were bought up by neighbors and his shop stood there empty, but always with the name of the deceased merchant still over the doors, together with lists of all the valuable gifts in the shop.

"I too am like this sort of shop," I say to myself in shame. "I still bear the name of life, but my life is all bought up by my neighbors."

O Son of God, Son of Life, fill my earthliness with life.

First clear the stones from my soul, and nourish it with true bread. Purge my heart of serpents and fill it with Yourself. And dispel the darkness from my mind, and flood it with the light of heaven.

For I shall not truly return to life, if only my soul returns to life while my heart remains stuffed with mortal desires. Nor shall I be resurrected into Your Kingdom, O Lord, if only my heart is purified while my mind still remains filled with darkness.

Truly, until all three fountainheads within me are clarified, my life will be bereft of life. If one is clarified, the other two will muddy it.

If two are clarified, the third is sufficient to muddy them both. Each of the three fountainheads within me is either the contaminator or the Saviour of the other two.

O Son of Life, fill my earthliness with life. You are my Wisdom, for in You lies not only divine mentality, but also divine virginity and divine sanctity. For had You not been born out of divine virginity and divine sanctity, You would not have been Wisdom, but finite human knowledge and expertise.

O Son of God, You are the only nourishing bread of my life. I beseech You, do not turn Your face away from me, a sinner. You are the only living water that can water the parched desert of my life.

I beseech You, do not turn Your face away from me, a sinner. You are the only fresh air, that can heal the infirmity of my life.

I beseech You, do not turn Your face away from me, a sinner. But have mercy on me and save me!

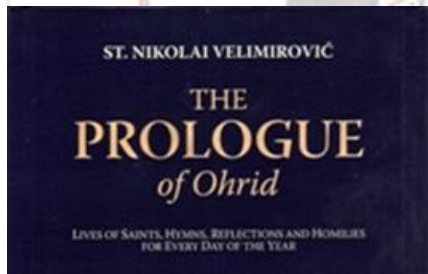
Sayings of the Ascetics of the Orthodox Church, LIII:

II. The Realities of the Spiritual World

The Saints

Many think that the saints are far from us. But they are far from those who distance themselves from them, and very close to those keep the commandments of Christ and have the grace of the Holy Spirit. In the heavens, all things are moved by the Holy Spirit. But the Holy Spirit is on earth too. He lives in our Church. He lives in the Mysteries. He is in the Holy Scriptures. He is in the souls of the faithful. The Holy Spirit unites all things, and therefore the saints are close to us. And when we pray to them, then the Holy Spirit hears our prayers, and our souls feel that they are praying for us.

+ *St. Silouan the Athonite, Writings, XII.3*



1. The Holy Martyr Sabbas Stratelates (The General)

This glorious Sabbas lived in Rome during the reign of Emperor Aurelian and held the rank of general. By ancestry, he was of a Gothic tribe. He often visited Christians in prison and assisted them from his own estate. Because of his great purity and fasting, God gave him authority over unclean spirits. When Sabbas was accused of being a Christian, he courageously stood before the emperor, threw down his military belt, and openly confessed Christ the Lord. Sabbas was tortured in various ways: he was flogged, scrapped with iron claws, and burned with candles. He did not succumb to these deadly tortures but appeared alive and healthy. His military companions, seeing that God was obviously helping him, embraced the Christian Faith, and seventy of them were immediately beheaded by order of the emperor. Christ the Lord Himself appeared in a great light to St. Sabbas in prison and encouraged His martyr. After that, Sabbas was condemned to death by drowning. He was thrown into a deep river, where he gave up his soul to God in the year 272 A.D. His soul went to the Lord, to Whom he had remained faithful through many tortures.

2. The Venerable Elizabeth

In her early youth Elizabeth entered the monastic state in the Monastery of Saints Cosmas and Damian in Constantinople, taking upon herself heavy ascetic labors for the sake of Christ God and for the sake of her soul. She considered herself a bride of Christ and viewed this world as though it did not exist. Her great compassion toward people, especially toward the sick and the suffering, emanated from her great love for God. With the gift that God had bestowed upon her, she cured various diseases and afflictions of the people. During her nightly prayers she was seen to be encompassed by a heavenly light. Following her death, her relics possessed the power of healing, and a great number of the sick and suffering have gathered at her grave throughout the ages. She died peacefully and entered into the eternal joy of her Lord in the year 540 A.D.

3. The Holy Martyrs Eusebius, Neon, Leontius and Longius

These four were military companions of St. George. Witnessing the courageous endurance and miracles of St. George, these wonderful soldiers became Christians, for which they were beheaded.

4. The Holy Martyrs Pasicrates and Valentine

When the judge urged Pasicrates to offer sacrifice to the idols, (as he had likewise urged the martyr's brother, Papianus, who fell away from Christ because of the fear of torture), Pasicrates placed his hand in the fire and cried out: "The body is mortal and is consumed by fire, but the soul is immortal and does not feel the visible sufferings!" His mother sustained him and encouraged him to endure to the end. He was beheaded with Valentine and both took up habitation in the Kingdom of Christ in about the year 228 A.D.

5. The Venerable Thomas, Fool-for-Christ

Whenever he was in the city of Antioch on business for the monastery, Thomas always feigned insanity for the sake of Christ. A certain Anastasius did not want to give Thomas the alms that he sought for the monastery but struck him with his fist. Thomas then prophesied: "From now on, neither will I receive anything from Anastasius, nor will Anastasius be able to give me anything." After one day Anastasius died, and Thomas, prior to his return to the monastery, also died. Thus, the prophecy of this holy man was fulfilled. St. Thomas reposed in Daphni, near Antioch, in the time of Patriarch Domnus (546 - 560 A.D.).

6. The Holy Martyrs Luke and Nicholas

This wonderful young man Luke, a tailor by trade, suffered martyrdom for Christ in 1564 A.D. Nicholas suffered martyrdom in the year 1776 A.D.

Hymn of Praise

Saint Thomas the Fool-for-Christ

St. Thomas pretends to be deranged
For the sake of Christ his Savior,
But in his heart he glorifies God,
The only One, the Creator of the world.
God's name is in his heart:
"Have mercy upon me, O good God!"
He nourishes his soul by this:
"Have mercy upon me, O good God!"
Holy Thomas is not concerned
What the world will say about him.
"Let the world rant, let it threaten;
God will pronounce true judgment.
Whosoever pleases the world
Will be found to be false before God."
And Thomas smiles
At the world which pretends to be important.
"O you shadow above the water,
Why do you pretend to be so important?
All reality is in the Lord
When you consider yourself as nothing,
Then will you glorify Him."

Reflection

In exhorting Christians to attend church for prayer, St. John Chrysostom says: "If someone delivers to subjugated citizens a royal decree, the citizens do not question the life of the messenger, as to whether he is rich or poor or righteous or sinful, but all listen attentively to that which he is reading. If someone has not heard, he asks one who has heard. When you have such great awe of earthly rulers, how much more should you heed us (priests) here, where the Creator of the heavenly powers speaks through us sinners?" Indeed, what is Holy Scripture but a document [Grammata, Letter] of the Heavenly King? Why is it that this unique and saving document does not interest us every day and every hour, when the least authority in the country and his trivial orders do interest us? St. Anthony said: "Let everything you do have its justification in Holy Scripture." But how can you have justification in Holy Scripture if you are not familiar with Holy Scripture?

Contemplation

Contemplate the resurrected Lord Jesus:

1. How His Resurrection drives away from us all confusion, gloom and sadness;
2. How His Resurrection instills serenity, courage and goodwill into the souls of men.

Homily: on the vanity of everything in comparison with Christ

"I ... count them but refuse, that I may win Christ" (Philippians 3:8).

The Apostle who wrote this had worldly knowledge; he had wealth and friends; he had youth and health; he had all the requisites of worldly success among his people. But he says, "I left all." For the sake of Christ Jesus the Lord, he left all. Before the sages of this world, he became as a fool; before the rich, he became as a beggar; before his friends, he became as an enemy. He exhausted his youth and health by voluntary sufferings and afflictions. With one stroke he closed for himself all prospects for worldly success. Why did you do this, O Holy Apostle Paul? Because, *I ... count them but rubbish, that I may win Christ.*

Brethren, did the Apostle Paul deceive himself, leaving everything as rubbish, and did he gain something greater in gaining Christ? Twenty centuries have testified that the holy Apostle did not deceive himself and that, in gaining Christ, he received something incomparably greater and better than that which he had abandoned and sacrificed. He received wisdom above all worldly knowledge; and riches imperishable and incorruptible; and friends in the form of the true angels of God; and eternal youth without disease and aging; and divine success that lasts without change in eternal life. All of this he gained in gaining Christ. All of this he received in leaving all that the world offers to its favorites.

Indeed, brethren, Christ is better than the world. There are no words that could express His superiority over the world. The world deceives its favorites, but Christ rewards His true favorites. The world gives little and takes all. The world offers decay and takes away life. Christ, however, seeks little and gives all. He seeks that we discard decay, and He gives us eternal life. Brethren, Christ is our one and only true friend.

O resurrected Lord Christ, help us to renounce triviality, to renounce decay, and grant us eternal life.

To Thee be glory and praise forever. Amen.



The Morning Offering – Daily Inspiration with Abbott Tryphon

The Garden *Tending the garden of the heart*

Both my Norwegian grandfather, and my mother, were avid gardeners, so I grew up surrounded by the beauty of plants and flowers. The cottage garden is a distinct style of garden that is certainly my favorite. The use of traditional materials, in an informal design, together with dense plantings, and a mixture of ornamental and edible plants, is identified the world over as English in origin. The grandeur and formal structure, found in classical English estate gardens, has surrendered to homey and functional gardens that are filled with grace and charm.

The massive plantings of perennials, annuals, vegetables, and plants and flowers of every size and color, display like nothing else, the variety of beauty that bespeaks God’s creation. These gardens remind me of people, coming, as we do, in every size and color, all beautiful in our own special way. Some are like climbing roses, reaching to the heavens, and God’s glory. Others are like creepers, hugging the ground, and covering large areas like a carpet of green. Some are like cactus, needing little water, while able to living in the ascetic splendor of an Egyptian desert. Others, like water lilies, display beautiful blooms, even while floating in squalid water.

Like plants, we need watering and tending. For Christians, the Waters of Life can be found in baptism, where we are immersed in the Living Waters that bring us into life, standing us before the Creator, Who, like the gardener, tends to our needs, that we may grow and bloom to all our potential.

As we tend to our own heart, we must make sure we have guarded ourselves against the weeds that would strangle us, and smother our full potential as children of God. We must make sure we avail ourselves to the life sustaining food and water, that comes from God as His Uncreated Grace. And, as the Body of Christ, the Church, (“neither male nor female, Greek nor Jew”) we will flower together, making up a garden of beautiful souls, basking in the Light of the Son of Righteousness.

With love in Christ,
Abbot Tryphon



Daily Reflection **Take away the Stone**

“Then Jesus, again greatly disturbed, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone was lying against it. Jesus said, ‘Take away

the stone.’ Martha, the sister of the dead man, said to him, ‘Lord, already there is a stench because 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 looked upward and said, ‘Father, I thank you for having heard me. I knew that you always hear me, but I have said this for the sake of the crowd standing here, so 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 strips of cloth, and his face wrapped in a cloth. Jesus said to them, ‘Unbind him, and let him go.’ Many of the Jews therefore, who had come with Mary and had seen what Jesus did, believed in him.” (Jn 11: 38-45)

Our Lord does not actually need help, when it comes to “taking away the stone” from a tomb. Because, as G.K. Chesterton famously said, we have “a God who knew the way out of a grave.” But here



Christ enlists the help of the people, allowing them to open the tomb, and indeed open their hearts, to faith in, and vision of, *“the glory of God.”* He also prays aloud to the Father, just *“so that they may believe.”* He then has the people “unbind” the resurrected Lazarus, further engaging them, involving them, in the mystery of bodily resurrection. He’s effectively inviting them to “touch” Lazarus, as He will later invite the disciples to “touch Him and see,” after His own resurrection (Lk 24: 39).

Today our Lord raises His friend, Lazarus, from the dead, introducing us to the mystery that is yet more fully to unfold, and to expand to all of us, in His own glorious resurrection. Let me hear His call to me today, to “take away the stone,” or any other obstacle in my heart, to the light and truth He wants to bring me. Let me “unbind” myself of any anxiety, despondency, or indifference, preparing to greet Him in faith, as He enters Jerusalem. *“Hosanna. Blessed is He who comes, the King of Israel.”*

April – 2016

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
					1 8:00-9:15pm – Living Clean NA Group Mtg.	2 6:30pm Vespers IC XC
3 9:30am No School 9:40am Hours 9:45am Gen'l Confession 10:00am Divine Liturgy/Social	4	5 7:00-8:00pm – The Grey Book Study Mtg. NA Grp	6 6:30pm Presanctified Liturgy/Potluck	7	8 8:00-9:15pm – Living Clean NA Group Mtg.	9 6:30pm Vespers N
10 9:30am Sunday School 9:40am Hours 10:00am Divine Liturgy/Social	11 6:30pm The Canon of St. Andrew of Crete Service	12 7:00-8:00pm – The Grey Book Study Mtg. NA Grp	13 6:30pm Presanctified Liturgy/Potluck	14	15 8:00-9:15pm – Living Clean NA Group Mtg.	16 No Vespers
17 9:30am Sunday School 9:40am Hours 10:00am Divine Liturgy / Social	18	19 7:00-8:00pm – The Grey Book Study Mtg. NA Grp	20 6:30pm Presanctified Liturgy/Potluck	21	22 8:00-9:15pm – Living Clean NA Group Mtg.	23 6:30pm Vespers
24 <u>Palm Sunday</u> 9:30am Sunday School 9:40am Hours 10:00am Divine Liturgy / Social	25 <u>Great and Holy Monday</u>	26 <u>Great and Holy Tuesday</u> 7:00-8:00pm – The Grey Book Study Mtg. NA Grp	27 <u>Great and Holy Wednesday</u> 6:30pm Holy Uction Service/Potluck	28 <u>Great and Holy Thursday</u>	29 <u>Great and Holy Friday</u> 7:00pm Matins Service 8:00-9:15pm – Living Clean NA Group Mtg.	30 <u>Great and Holy Saturday</u> 11:30pm Pascha Service 12:00am Resurrection Divine Liturgy followed by Blessing of Pascha Baskets