

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

V. Rev. Dr. Matthew Searfoorce, Rector

Sub-Deacon Edward Dawson Sub-Deacon Vlashi

Parish Council President: Andrew Romanofsky Parish Council Vice President: Holly Dawson



Sunday, December 18, 2016

Gospel: Matthew 1:1-25

Tone 1 (13th of Luke)

Epistle: Hebrews 11:9-10, 17-23, 32-40

26th Sunday After Pentecost

Sunday before the Nativity. Martyr Sebastian at Rome and his companions: Martyrs Nicostratus, Zoë, Castorius, Tranquillinus, Marcellinus, Mark, Claudius, Symphorian, Victorinus, Tiburtius, and Castulus (ca. 287). Ven. Sebastian, Abbot of Pshekhónsk Monastery (Vologdá—ca. 150). Righteous Simeon, Wonderworker of Verkhotúr'ye (1694). St. Modestus, Archbishop of Jerusalem (633-634). St. Florus, Bishop of Amisus (7th c.). St. Michael the Confessor at Constantinople (ca. 845).

Troparion – Tone 2

Great are the accomplishments of faith, / for the Three Holy Youths rejoiced in the flames as though at the waters of rest, / and the prophet Daniel appeared, / a shepherd to the lions as though they were sheep. / So by their prayers, O Christ God, save our souls!

Kontakion – Tone 6

(For when the Sunday before the Nativity falls on December 18-19) / You did not worship the graven image, / O thrice-blessed ones, / but armed with the immaterial Essence of God, / you were glorified glorified in a trial by fire. / From the midst of unbearable flames you called on God, crying: / Hasten, O compassionate One! / Speedily come to our aid, / for You are merciful and able to do as You will.



Sunday before the Nativity

Prayer Requests

For Health of:

Maryann Kuzemchak, on her birthday, offered by her family.

Aunt Jean & Sandra, on their birthday, offered by their family.

Maribeth Romanofsky, on her birthday, offered by her family.

Matushka Barbara Baz, who had surgery on Wed. Dec. 14; **Charles Toth**, with ALS & **Dorothy Lovchuk**, facing surgery, offered by Archbishop Michael and the Diocese of NY/NJ.

In Memory of:

Michael Bodulow, offered by his family.

Adam Danish, offered by his daughter Linda Jankowski.

Mary Drenchko, matriarch of Alpha, offered by Archbishop Michael and the Diocese of NY/NJ.

Pannikhida:

Michael Bodulow, offered by his family.

Liturgical Schedule

Sunday, December 18th

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

Saturday, December 24th

6:30 pm: Christmas Eve
Vespers

Sunday, December 25th

9:30 am: No Sunday School
9:40 am: Hours
10:00 am: Divine Liturgy

Saturday, December 31st

6:30 pm: Vespers

Sunday, January 1st

9:30 am: No Sunday School
9:40 am: Hours
9:45 am: General
Confession
10:00 am: Divine Liturgy

Saturday, January 7th

6:30 pm: Vespers

Sunday, January 8th

9:30 am: No Sunday School
9:40 am: Hours
9:45 am: General
Confession
10:00 am: Divine Liturgy

Bulletin Sponsors:

***The Bodulow Family;
Romanofsky Family;
Kuzemchak Family; Linda
Jankowski & the family of
Aunt Jean & Sandra.***

Readings:

The Prokeimenon in the 4th Tone:

Blessed art Thou, O Lord God of our fathers / and praised and glorified is Thy name
forever! (*Song of the three Holy Children, v. 3*)
vs. For Thou art just in all that Thou hast done for us! (*v. 4*)

Epistle: Hebrews 11:9-10, 17-23, 32-40 (Sunday before Nativity)

Brethren, by faith Abraham sojourned in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, living in tents with Isaac and Jacob, heirs with him of the same promise. For he looked forward to the city which has foundation, whose builder and maker is God. And what more shall I say? For time would fail me to tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets - who through faith conquered kingdoms, enforced justice, received promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched raging fire, escaped the edge of the sword, won strength out of weakness, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight. Women received their dead by resurrection. Some were tortured, refusing to accept release, that they might rise again to a better life. Others suffered mocking and scourging, and even chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were tempted, they were killed with the sword; they went about in skins of sheep and goats, destitute, afflicted, ill-treated - of whom the world was not worthy - wandering over deserts and mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth. And all these, though well attested by their faith, did not receive what was promised, since God had foreseen something better for us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect.

Alleluia in the 4th Tone:

We have heard with our ears, O God, for our fathers have told us.
(*Psalm 43:2*)
vs. Thou hast saved us from them that oppose us, and hast put to shame them that hate
us. (*Psalm 43:8*)

Gospel: Matthew 1:1-25 (Sunday before the Nativity)

The book of the Genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.

Abraham was the father of Isaac, and Isaac the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers, and Judah the father of Perez and Zerah by Tamar, and Perez the father of Hezron, and Hezron the father of Ram, and Ram the father of Amminadab, and Amminadab the father of Nahshon, and Nahshon the father of Salmon, and Salmon the father of Boaz by Rahab, and Boaz the father of Obed by Ruth, and Obed the father of Jesse, and Jesse the father of David the king. And David was the father of Solomon by the wife of Uriah, and Solomon the father of Rehoboam, and Rehoboam the father of Abijah, and Abijah the father of Asa, and Asa the father of Jehoshaphat, and Jehoshaphat the father of Joram, and Joram the father of Uzziah, and Uzziah the father of Jotham, and Jotham the father of Ahaz, and Ahaz the father of Hezekiah, and Hezekiah the father of Manasseh, and Manasseh the father of Amos, and Amos the father of Josiah, and Josiah the father of Jechoniah and his brothers, at the time of the deportation to Babylon.

And after the deportation to Babylon: Jechoniah was the father of Shealtiel, and Shealtiel the father of Zerubbabel, and Zerubbabel the father of Abiud, and Abiud the father of Eliakim, and Eliakim the father of Azor, and Azor the father of Zadok, and Zadok the father of Achim, and Achim the father of Eliud, and Eliud the father of Eleazar, and Eleazar the father of Matthan, and Matthan the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom Jesus was born, who is called Christ. So all the generations from Abraham to David were fourteen generations, and from David to the deportation to Babylon fourteen generations, and from the deportation to Babylon to the Christ fourteen generations. Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child of the Holy Spirit; and her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly. But as he considered this, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit; she will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: "Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and his name shall be called Emmanuel" (which means, God with us). When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took his wife, but knew her not until she had borne a son; and he called his name Jesus.



Sunday before the Nativity

The Sunday before the Nativity of the Lord (December 18-24) is known as the Sunday of the Holy Fathers. On this day the Church commemorates all those who were well-pleasing to God from all ages, from Adam to Saint Joseph the Betrothed of the Most Holy Theotokos, those who are mentioned in the genealogy of Luke 3:23-38. The holy prophets and prophetesses are also remembered today, especially the Prophet Daniel and the three holy youths (December 17).

The Troparion to the Prophet Daniel and the three holy youths ("Great are the accomplishments of faith...") is quite similar to the Troparion for Saint Theodore the Recruit (February 17, and the first Saturday of Great Lent). The Kontakion to Saint Theodore, who suffered martyrdom by fire, reminds us that he also had faith as his

breastplate (see I Thessalonians 5:8).



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

Memorial Candles: Candles 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.

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.



Orthodox Church of the Mother of God: Parish News

Help to beautify our church this holiday season by bringing in a poinsettia plant at any time from now until the Nativity feast. There will not be a collection for flowers this year. Thank you!

"Schedule Change: Saturday, December 24 - Christmas Eve Vespers: 6:30 p.m."

Sunday, December 25 - Christmas Day: Hours 9:40 a.m., Divine Liturgy: 10:00 a.m."



NY/NJ Diocese News



Orthodox Church in America (OCA) News

Metropolitan Tikhon addresses recent bombing of Cairo Coptic church

In a letter addressed to His Holiness, Tawadros II, Pope of Alexandria and Patriarch of All Africa of the Coptic Orthodox Church of Alexandria, dated Thursday, December 15, 2016, His Beatitude, Metropolitan Tikhon expressed "the deep sorrow and shared grief of the Bishops, the clergy, the monastics and the faithful of the Orthodox Church in America" in response to the deadly bomb blast at Cairo's Saint Peter Church, adjacent to the city's Coptic Cathedral of Saint Mark, on Sunday, December 11.

As of Monday, at least 25 persons had been reported to have been killed in the blast, with at least 49 others known to have been injured. Media reports indicate that most of the victims were women and children.

"Christ is in our midst! It is with sorrow and yet with hope that I extend to Your Holiness the above traditional words of greeting in which Christians express their faith in the risen and ascended Lord who nevertheless remains among us, even in our darkest moments," Metropolitan Tikhon began. "The world has once more witnessed such a dark moment in the brutal and senseless murder of the faithful of Saint Peter's Coptic Orthodox Church in Cairo this week. These cruel and inhuman acts, which have been perpetrated by militant extremists upon the Coptic Orthodox Church, are an affront against all of humanity.

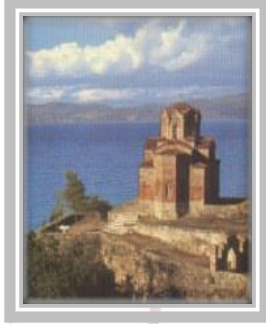
"I would like to express the deep sorrow and shared grief of the Bishops, the clergy, the monastics and the faithful of the Orthodox Church in America to the families and friends of those whose lives were brutally cut down in this most recent attack," Metropolitan Tikhon wrote. "This sorrow and grief is felt in the hearts of all Christians, and indeed, should resonate with all who would consider themselves human beings.

"This act is made more tragic in that it has taken place during this season in which the Christian world prepares for the Nativity in the flesh of our Lord, God and Savior Jesus Christ, who became incarnate to heal this broken world and to raise up fallen humanity," Metropolitan Tikhon continued. "Even the natural world proclaims this great mystery: 'Make ready, O cave, for the Ewe Lamb comes, bearing Christ in her womb. And do thou, O manger, accept Him who by His word has loosed us dwellers on earth from acts that are against reason.

"Our prayer is that all dwellers on earth would indeed receive the life-giving Word and become reason-endowed creatures who stand fast in their faith in God and refrain from acts against reason and against their fellow human beings," Metropolitan Tikhon concluded. "May we enter a new time of tolerance and religious peace in Egypt and in the entire region of the Middle East through Christ who has mercy on us and on His whole world."

A PDF version of Metropolitan Tikhon’s letter may be downloaded for distribution.

In related news, Archpriest John Jillions, OCA Chancellor, represented Metropolitan Tikhon at a prayer service at Archangel Michael and Saint Mena Coptic Orthodox Church, Staten Island, NY, on Thursday evening, December 15, honoring those who lost their lives in the bombing. During the service, Father John read from Metropolitan Tikhon’s letter to Pope Tawadros.



Prayers by the Laker, St. Velimirovich, LXXXVII:

God-bearers, you are the salt of the earth and the light of the world. If you lose your flavor and become dark, the world will be a shell of life, a snake’s slough, which a serpent sheds amid the thorns.

You contain the heavenly flame amid the ashes. If you allow yourselves to die out, the world will be a pile of ashes beyond the gates of life.

Death-bearers babble about your life, because they have no life of their own.

Perjurers swear by your God, because they have no God of their own.

A liar justifies himself with your truth, because he has none of his own.

The world’s wise men seek wisdom by a roundabout way and return to your wisdom,

because there is no other.

Weaklings persecute you, because they fear your strength, and they themselves cannot take it away.

Cowards envy you for your courage, for there is nothing to encourage them.

Behold, the rich all beg from you, yet no one can give you anything. You are rich, for you have God. You are wealthy, for you are God-bearers.

Your soul is the cradle of the Living God. Your heart is His throne. Your mind is Mount Sinai, where He alone gives tablets of stone and speaks.

Journey freely with God within you; you will not lose the way, and you will not be left without shelter. Enter with Him freely through the gates of the day, and the day will be yours. Enter with Him freely through the gates of the night, and the night will cringe with its specters, and will show you its wonders.

Do not sell your treasure, for the world cannot pay for it.

Do not trade with the universe, for the universe can give nothing except itself. And its entirety is like paper compared to gold. It will burn up one day, and will be reduced to a handful of ashes. Will it die? It is already dead, and has nothing without your spiritual treasure.

Space from one end to the other, cannot store your treasure.

Time, from one end to the other, cannot calculate your treasure.

The world persecutes you, because you have peace, and it has none.

The world envies you, because you have wealth, and it is impoverished.

The world fears you, because you have power, and it is powerless.

The world hates you, because you have blessedness, and it is wretched.

Do not spite the world, and do not add oil to the fire. For the whole world is ablaze with the flames of malice.

You have been isolated, you say? Are sepulchers really any kind of fellowship? One person alive in a cemetery is less alone than all the graves of the dead.

You are few in number, you say? But you are armed. Your adversaries are bound sepulchers.

The world is lifeless without you. You are the channels through which life pours into the world.

The world is joyless without you. Through you laughter is entering a prison.

Do not fatten your bodies, for to fatten is to fester. Do not pack mud onto your bones, for your bones will become sluggish and your souls will become thin.

Zealously keep the divine Bridegroom within you, and beware lest you frighten Him away. He is truly as timorous as a bird, and will not impose Himself. At a single unseemly thought He flees from the mind. At a single filthy desire He flees from the heart.

Remember: if He abandons you, His last dug-out, the world will be a shell of life, a snake’s slough, which a serpent sheds amid the thorns.

Sayings of the Ascetics of the Orthodox Church, LXXXVII:

**III. Us and Our Neighbors
Relationships With Other People**

Adorn yourself with truth, try to speak truth in all things; and do not support a lie, no matter who asks you. If you speak the truth and someone gets mad at you, don't be upset, but take comfort in the words of the Lord: Blessed are those who are persecuted for the sake of truth, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven (Matt. 5:10).

+ (St. Gennadius of Constantinople, *The Golden Chain*, 26,29)



The Morning Offering – Daily Inspiration by Abbott Tryphon

Being Critical of Others

The critic will never know either defeat or victory

It is easy to be critical of another person, finding fault with what we perceive they are doing, have done, or have not done. Yet the man who points out how another man has stumbled, finding fault in something he himself has not done, and in what he himself thinks he could have done better, is in reality the one at fault. It is the one who has done the work whom he criticizes.

The doer of the work may have stumbled, or perhaps could have done a better job, but he must receive credit for having tried. This man still deserves credit, for he is the one who put forth the effort, whereas the critic has done nothing, and, knowing he has done nothing, wishes to take the spotlight off himself, pointing, instead, to the doer. The credit belongs to the man who has erred, and who perhaps comes up short again and again. He knows that without chancing some error or failure, no deed will ever be done. This man takes up a worthy deed with great enthusiasm, even in spite of the fact he may fail. The critic, fearing he will fail, does nothing. The critic will never know either defeat or victory.



***Daily Reflection
Surrendering to Joy***

“Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. Do not worry 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 surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.” (Phil 4: 4-7)

I dare say, there are times when I don't want to be told to “rejoice.” In fact there are times when I would find it utterly inappropriate and annoying, to be told to “rejoice.”

And yet the Apostle says to the Philippians, and to me today – rejoice “always.” Evidently, the Philippians, like me, were reluctant to hear this word, so Paul says it twice: “Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice.” I think they had lost sight of the fact that “the Lord is near,” and let “worry” block out the “peace of God, which surpasses all understanding.” Or maybe they just believed in “worrying” more than in the “joy” of handing things over to God. Worry is an addictive kind of thing.

In any event, let me not struggle against this word today, and surrender to the joy of one simple fact: “The Lord is near.” I can open up to God today, letting my “requests be made known” to Him, and give up worrying. Because I have that choice. I choose to rejoice today in the Lord, as I let Him into my heart, because I can.



Holy Orthodox Quotes

“All who have lived according to God still live unto God, though they have departed this life. For this reason, God is called the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, since he is the God, not of the dead, but of the living (cf. Mt. 23:32).”

+St Gregory the Theologian

2 Corinthians 5:1-10

For we know that if our earthly house, this tent, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.† For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed with our habitation which is from heaven, if indeed, having been clothed, we shall not be found naked. For we who are in this tent groan, being burdened, not because we want to be unclothed, but further clothed, that mortality may be swallowed up by life. Now He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who also has given us the Spirit as a guarantee.† So we are always confident, knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord. For we walk by faith, not by sight. We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord. Therefore we make it our aim, whether present or absent, to be well pleasing to Him. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.†

Philippians 1:21-23

For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain. But if I live on in the flesh, this will mean fruit from my labor; yet what I shall choose I cannot tell. For I am hard-pressed between the two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better

The Philokalia: Daily Readings

Spiritual reading, vigils, prayer and psalmody prevent the intellect from being deluded by the passions.

+ *St Thalassios the Libyan, 400 Texts on Love and Self-Control*

Ancient Christian Wisdom

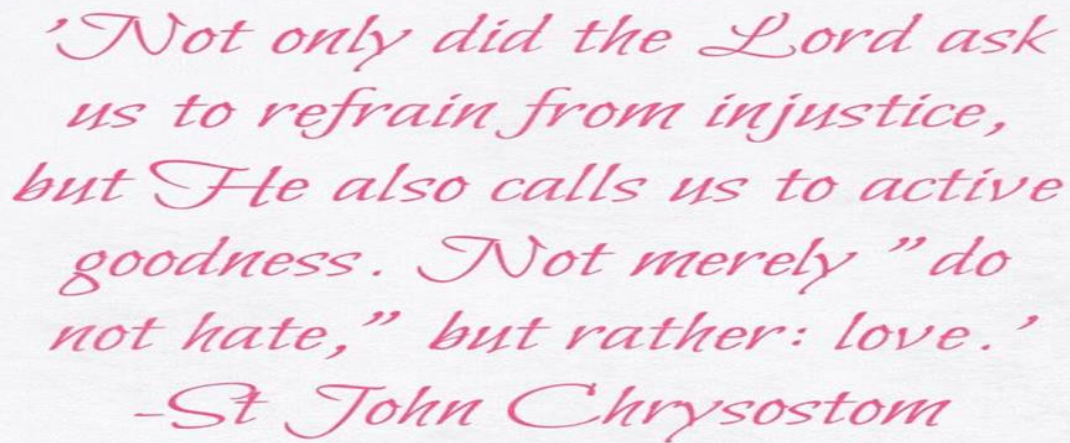
If God is slow in answering your request, or if you ask but do not promptly receive anything, do not be upset, for you are not wiser than God.

+ **St. Isaac of Syria**

Through the Grace of God – Orthodox Christianity

St Isaac the Syrian: Tribulations and Humility

“God permits tribulations and adversities to befall people – even the saintly – so that they may persist in humility. But if we harden our hearts against adversities and tribulations, he also hardens these tribulations against us. On the other hand if we accept them in humility and with a contrite heart, God will mingle tribulation with mercy.”



*'Not only did the Lord ask
us to refrain from injustice,
but He also calls us to active
goodness. Not merely "do
not hate," but rather: love.'*
-St John Chrysostom