

*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: Trudy Ellmore      Parish Council Vice President: Holly Dawson



**Sunday, December 27, 2015**

Gospel: Matthew 2:13-23

**Tone 5**

Epistle: Galatians 1:11-19

*30<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost (14<sup>th</sup> of Luke); Third Day of the Feast of the Nativity. Sunday after the Nativity: Commemoration of the Holy Righteous David the King, Joseph the Betrothed, and James the Brother of the Lord*



*Sunday after the Nativity*

**Glory to  
Jesus Christ!**

**Glory  
Forever!**

*Proclaim the wonder, O Joseph, to David, the ancestor of God: you saw a Virgin great with Child, you gave glory with the shepherds, you worshipped with the Magi, you received the news from the angel. Pray to Christ God to save our souls!*

## **Today's Commemorated Feasts and Saints**

**30<sup>th</sup> Sunday After Pentecost — Tone 5. Third Day of the Feast of the Nativity. Sunday after Nativity. Holy Righteous Ones: Joseph the Betrothed, David the King, and James the Brother of the Lord.** Holy Protomartyr and Archdeacon Stephen (34). Ven. Theodore Graptus ("the Branded"), Confessor and brother of St. Theophanes the Hymnographer (ca. 840). St. Theodore, Archbishop of Constantinople (ca. 686).

## **Prayer Requests**

### **For Health of:**

**Karen & David Seaman**, on their 43<sup>rd</sup> wedding anniversary, offered by the Jankowski family.

**Willian D. Kuzemchak**, on his birthday (Dec.24<sup>th</sup>), son of Bill & Maryann  
**Archbishop Nikon**, who had surgery on Monday 12/14 and is recuperating at The Pavilion at Brigham and Women's Hospital, Boston, offered by the Diocese of NY/NJ

**Archpriest John Udics**, had surgery ton Monday 12/21 in Philadelphia, offered by the Diocese of NY/NJ

***Liturgical Schedule:***

**Sunday, December 27<sup>th</sup>**

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

**Saturday, January 2<sup>nd</sup>**

6:30 pm: Vespers

**Sunday, January 3<sup>rd</sup>**

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

**Tuesday, January 5<sup>th</sup>**

6:30 pm: Theophany

**Saturday, January 9<sup>th</sup>**

6:30 pm: Vespers

**Sunday, January 10<sup>th</sup>**

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

**Saturday, January 16<sup>th</sup>**

6:30 pm: Vespers

**Sunday, January 17<sup>th</sup>**

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

***Bulletin Sponsors:***

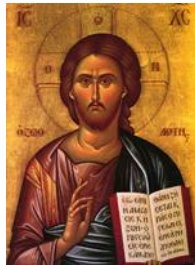
***Jankowski Family  
Bill & Maryann Kuzemchak***

***Readings:***



**Epistle: Galatians 1:11-19**

**BRETHREN**, I would have you know that the gospel which was preached by me is not man's gospel. For I did not receive it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came through a revelation of Jesus Christ. For you have heard of my former life in Judaism, how I persecuted the church of God violently and tried to destroy it; and I advanced in Judaism beyond many of my own age among my people, so extremely zealous was I for the traditions of my fathers. But when he who had set me apart before I was born, and had called me through his grace, was pleased to reveal his Son to me, in order that I might preach him among the Gentiles, I did not confer with flesh and blood, nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me, but I went away into Arabia; and again I returned to Damascus. Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to visit Cephas, and remained with him fifteen days. But I saw none of the other apostles except James the Lord's brother.



**Gospel: Matthew 2:13-23**

**When the wise men departed**, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, "Rise, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there till I tell you; for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him." And he rose and took the child and his mother by night, and departed to Egypt, and remained there until the death of Herod. This was to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet, "Out of Egypt have I called my son." Then Herod, when he saw that he had been tricked by the wise men, was in a furious rage, and he sent and killed all the male children in Bethlehem and in all that region who were two years old or under, according to the time which he had ascertained from the wise men. Then was fulfilled what was spoken by the prophet Jeremiah: "A voice was heard in Ramah, wailing and loud lamentation, Rachel weeping for her children; she refused to be consoled, because they were no more." But when Herod died, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, saying, "Rise, take the child and his mother, and go to the land of Israel, for those who sought the child's life are dead." And he rose and took the child and his mother, and went to the land of Israel. But when he heard that Archelaos reigned over Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there, and being warned in a dream he withdrew to the district of Galilee. And he went and dwelt in a city called Nazareth, that what was spoken by the prophets might be fulfilled, "He shall be called a Nazarene."



**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 can be obtained 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:  
[ChurchMotherOfGod@outlook.com](mailto:ChurchMotherOfGod@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*

*"Today is the last day to give your 2015 offerings to the church. The final deposit will be made before 12/31/15. If you wish to have a voting voice at the Annual Parish Meeting all membership dues must be paid in full before the end of 2015 according to the Parish By-Laws."*

*"Congratulations to Nick Zimmerman who made it into the National Honor Society! The criteria for the NHS are high and Nick hit the mark. Well done good and faithful servant!"*

*"Jaclyn Dantinne was elected Student of the Month at her school. Congratulations Jaclyn! Well done good and faithful servant!"*

*Next Council meeting will be January 31, 2016 at 12:15 pm*



### *Sisterhood of the Protector of the Mother of God: Announcements*

*"The Sisterhood raffling of a Nativity gift basket was held Sunday, December 13<sup>th</sup> and the winner of the basket was Nicholas Zimmerman."*



**NY/NJ Diocese News**

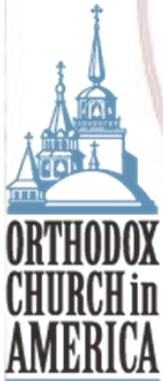


**CHRIST IS BORN! LET US GLORIFY HIM!**

His Eminence, Archbishop Michael, offers an **Archpastoral Letter** to the faithful of the diocese on the celebration of **Our Lord's Nativity**. In part, he writes: *"May your Christmas and coming new year be filled with all the joy and blessings of the First Nativity ... and because of the Gift that we receive, may we commend our whole lives to Christ our God ... knowing that 'There never was a king like this before!'"*

**LESSONS IN OUR FAITH: Instructional Videos for the Season**

The **"Lessons in Our Faith"** video series featuring Archbishop Michael offers concise and informative instruction on a variety of topics. Two videos are particularly appropriate at this time of year. One offers an insightful discussion of the life and spirit of the beloved **Saint Nicholas** the Wonderworking Archbishop of the 4th century (commemorated on December 6th). The other video is **"The Nativity of Christ: 7 Questions & 7 Answers."** Each video is available for viewing on any computer or mobile device, and each is 8-12 minutes in length.



**Orthodox Church in America (OCA) News**

**Nativity of our Lord 2015**

**Archpastoral Message of His Beatitude, Metropolitan Tikhon**

Christ is born! Glorify Him!

To the Honorable Clergy, Venerable Monastics, and Pious Faithful of the Orthodox Church in America,

My Beloved Brethren and Blessed Children in the Lord,

It is my joy and privilege to greet all of you on the radiant feast of the Nativity of our Lord, God and Savior Jesus Christ. In some 700 communities large and small sprinkled across the North American continent, from Canada, to the United States and Mexico, we gather together to celebrate the wonder of God's entry into human history. For many in our society this message is still as foolish as it was in the first century. But we continue to stand with the saints beside the manger, the Cross and the empty tomb to proclaim God's sacrificial love for us and for His Creation. As we sing on Christmas Day:

*I will give thanks to Thee, O Lord, with my whole heart;*

*I will make all Thy wonders known*

*In the company of the upright, in the congregation.*

*Great are the works of the Lord!*

*They are studied by all who have pleasure in them!*

*His work is glory and beauty, and His righteousness endures forever.*

*—Christmas Day, 1st Antiphon (Psalm 111:1-3)*

Truly, "Great are the works of the Lord!"

He sees a world filled with suffering and He Himself voluntarily suffers to make a path to healing.

He sees a world dying and He Himself dies to bring resurrection and unending life.

He sees a world in darkness and He Himself enters that darkness to bring a divine light that can never be extinguished.

He sees a world in bondage to the forces of evil and He submits Himself to that evil in order to destroy it forever.

The God Who is “ineffable, inconceivable, invisible, incomprehensible and eternally the same” empties Himself of power and divine privilege. He becomes a weak, fragile human being in order to share fully in our broken existence and in so doing offers the possibility of a life in communion with Him, with each other, and with all creation.

May our Lord bless each of you, your communities, and your families as you celebrate His Nativity and serve Him.

With love in the New-Born Christ,

+ **Tikhon**  
Archbishop of Washington  
Metropolitan of All America and Canada



#### **Teach Youth Basic Orthodoxy in Guatemala This Summer**

In Guatemala there are hundreds of children and young adults hungry to learn more about their Orthodox Christian Faith. A short-term OCMC mission team has been invited to offer a summer Church school program for two communities outside Nuevo Conception in southwest Guatemala to teach basic Orthodoxy. If you have a heart for youth or teaching, please prayerfully consider joining this team which will serve from June 15th to the 28th, 2016. To learn more or apply, visit [http://www.ocmc.org/about/view\\_team.aspx?TeamId=170](http://www.ocmc.org/about/view_team.aspx?TeamId=170), e-mail [teams@ocmc.org](mailto:teams@ocmc.org), or call 1-877-463-6784 FREE ext. 141.



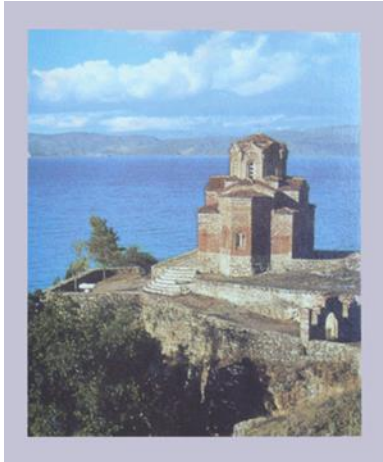
#### ***Sunday after the Nativity: Commemoration of the Holy Righteous David the King, Joseph the Betrothed, and James the Brother of the Lord***

The Forefeast of the Nativity of the Lord begins on December 20. From now on, most of the liturgical hymns will be concerned with the birth of the Savior. Many of the Church's hymns of this period are slightly modified versions of the hymns of Holy Week.

From the 20th to the 23rd we sing the Troparion (Tone 4) “Prepare, O Bethlehem, for Eden has been opened to all. Adorn yourself, O Ephratha, for the Tree of Life blossoms forth from the Virgin in the cave. Her womb is a spiritual paradise planted with the fruit divine; if we eat of it we shall live forever and not die like Adam. Christ is coming to restore the image which He made in the beginning.”

We also sing the Kontakion (Tone 3) “Today the Virgin comes to the cave where she will give birth past understanding to the Word from all eternity. Rejoice, O universe, when the tidings are proclaimed. Glorify, with the angels and shepherds, the one Who chose to be manifest as a newborn Child, while remaining the eternal God.”

At Vespers on this first day of the pre-feast we sing, “Let us celebrate, O people, the prefeast of Christ's Nativity; let us raise our minds on high, in spirit going up to Bethlehem....”



***Prayers by the Lake, St. Nikolai Velimirovich, XXXVII:***

*Martyrs of great love, pray to God for us.*

You who have known a love stronger than death, pray to Love for us.

You who in this life luckily escaped from the snare of transitory love, which is like a little color on a boulder, which the rain washes away;

You who have preached that love is more mysterious than the flesh, and more eternal than the stars in heaven;

You who through love have understood both wood and stone, both the beast in the forest and the fish in the water (for love breaks the seals of all mysteries, and all things appear naked to their lover);

You who with love have fulfilled all the prophets, satisfied all religions, and surpassed all laws;

You are the greatest of conquerors, who is stronger than you?

You are the greatest of wise men, who is wiser than you?

You are the greatest of precious stones, who is scarcer than you?

You are gods, who have seen yourselves in God and God in yourselves.

You have an honor greater than the angels, for the angels became angels without torment and martyrdom.

To you we bow down and pray, pray to God for us.

That we too may cleanse ourselves of the illusory love, that ends in hatred.

That we too may crown our faith and hope with a crown in which even suns have little value.

That we too may begin to see, and know, and rejoice with the joy, with which only the angels can rejoice.

That our life may also become a triradiate splendor, like the One from whom all splendor, unmixed with darkness, comes.

That we too may recognize in ourselves the eternal virgin, and the pre-eternal Son of the Virgin, and the dove-like Spirit.

Martyrs of great love, only your suffering is less than your love. Every worldly love brings suffering greater than its love. But you have loved what is deeper than time and wider than space.

When your mortal brothers hear about your sufferings they consider them unbelievable and unbearable. For they can really imagine themselves only in your sufferings and not in your love, in the meaning of your sufferings. Oh, if they could only imagine themselves in your love also! All your sufferings would seem like nothing to them, just as they seemed to you. Just as the cold rain and the howling of the wind seem like nothing to a mother as she hurries home to her child.

To one who has a goal greater than the world, the world can do nothing.

One who hurries to a home wider than space, space cannot contain.

One who has a love more precious than temporal creations, can neither be impeded nor trampled by time.

Across all rugged terrain and through all stormy tempests Love leads His beloved ones and draws them to Himself.

Martyrs of great love, pray to God for us.

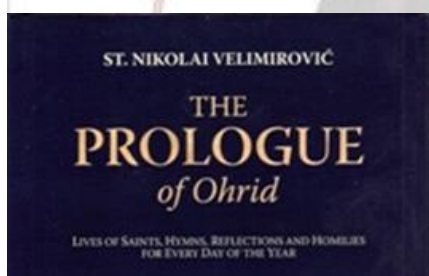


## *Sayings of the Ascetics of the Orthodox Church, XXXVI:*

### **Unbelief**

Pride does not allow the soul to set out on the path of faith. Here is my advice to the unbeliever: let him say, "Lord, if you exist, then illumine me, and I will serve you with all my heart and soul." And for this humble thought and readiness to serve God, the Lord will immediately illumine him... And then your soul will sense the Lord; she will sense that the Lord has forgiven her, and loves her, and you will know this from experience, and the grace of the Holy Spirit will be a witness in your soul of your salvation, and you will want to cry out to the whole world: "The Lord loves us so much!"

St. Silouan the Athonite, Writings, III.6



### **1. The Holy Protomartyr Stephen the Archdeacon**

Stephen was a kinsman of the Apostle Paul and one of those Jews who lived in the Hellenic provinces. Stephen was the first of the seven deacons whom the holy apostles ordained and appointed to the service of assisting the poor in Jerusalem. For this, he is called the archdeacon. By the power of his faith, Stephen worked great miracles among the people. The wicked Jews disputed with him, but they were always defeated by his wisdom and the power of the Spirit, Who acted through him. Then the shameful Jews, accustomed to calumnies and slander, incited the people and the elders of the people against the innocent Stephen, slandering him as though he had blasphemed against God and against Moses. False witnesses were quickly found who confirmed this. Stephen then stood before the people, and all *saw his face as it had been the face of an angel* (Acts 6:15), that is, his face was illumined with the light of grace as was once the face of Moses when he spoke with God. Stephen opened his mouth and enumerated the many good works and miracles that God had performed in the past for the people of Israel, as well as the many crimes and opposition to God on the part of this people. He especially rebuked them for the killing of Christ the Lord, calling them *betrayers and murderers* (Acts 7:52). And while they gnashed their teeth, Stephen beheld and saw the heavens open and the glory of God. That which he saw, he declared to the Jews: *Behold, I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing on the right hand of God!* (Acts 7:56). Then the malicious men took him outside the city and stoned him to death. Among his persecutors was his kinsman Saul, later the Apostle Paul. At that time, the Most-holy Theotokos, standing on a rock at a distance with St. John the Theologian, witnessed the martyrdom of this first martyr for the truth of her Son and God, and she prayed to God for Stephen. This occurred one year after the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the apostles. Gamaliel, a prince of the Jews and a secret Christian, clandestinely took St. Stephen's body and buried it on his own estate. Thus, this first among the Christian martyrs gloriously reposed and took up his habitation in the Kingdom of Christ God.

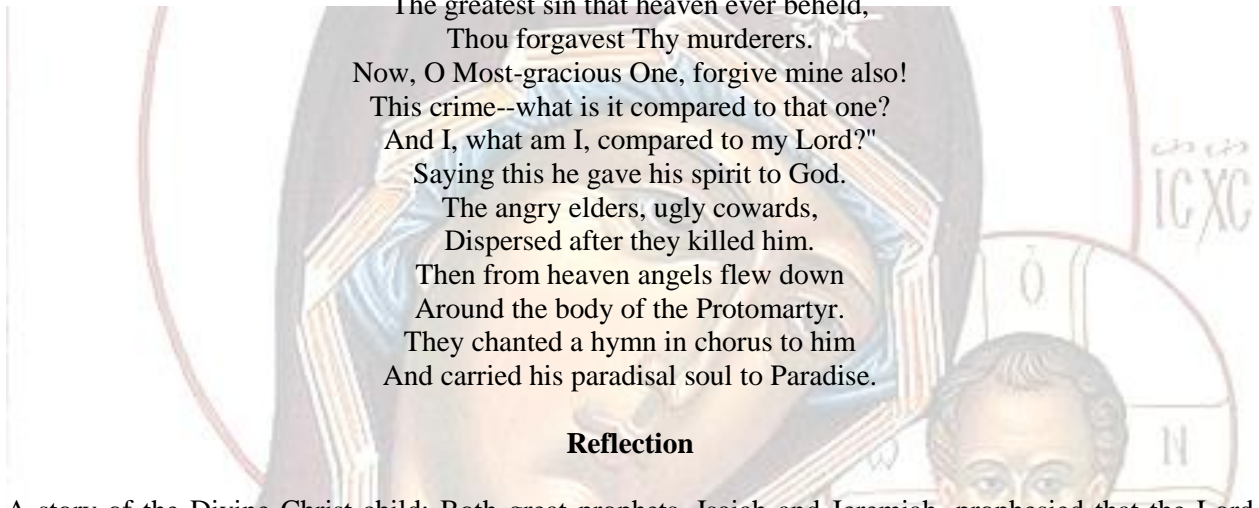
### **2. The Venerable Martyrs Theodore and Theophanes the Branded**

Theodore and Theophanes were blood brothers, born in Palestine and well educated in both secular and spiritual wisdom. They were monks in the community of St. Sava the Sanctified and later were ordained presbyters. They suffered harshly for their defense of icons under three emperors: Leo the Armenian, Michael Balbus and Theophilus. The demented Theophilus beat them with his own hands and ordered that they be branded with iron on their faces with derisive verses, for which they were called "the Branded." They were cast into prison in the town of Apamea in Bithynia. Theodore died there from his pains and wounds. Theophanes, freed at the time of the Emperors Theodore and Michael, was consecrated

Metropolitan of Nicaea by Patriarch Methodius. St. Theodore died in the year 833. These two wonderful brothers suffered for Christ and received a wonderful reward from Him in the Immortal Kingdom of Light.

### **Hymn of Praise**

*The Holy Protomartyr Stephen the Archdeacon*



Upon Stephen, illumined by the Spirit,  
The Jewish murderers rushed.  
Bloody Stephen knelt  
And in a loud voice cried out to God:  
"O Lord, Who from the Cross forgave  
The greatest sin to ever shake the earth,  
The greatest sin that heaven ever beheld,  
Thou forgavest Thy murderers.  
Now, O Most-gracious One, forgive mine also!  
This crime--what is it compared to that one?  
And I, what am I, compared to my Lord?"  
Saying this he gave his spirit to God.  
The angry elders, ugly cowards,  
Dispersed after they killed him.  
Then from heaven angels flew down  
Around the body of the Protomartyr.  
They chanted a hymn in chorus to him  
And carried his paradisal soul to Paradise.

### **Reflection**

A story of the Divine Christ-child: Both great prophets, Isaiah and Jeremiah, prophesied that the Lord would come to Egypt and that His presence would shake the pagan temples and destroy the idols. Isaiah wrote: *Behold, the Lord rideth upon a swift cloud and shall come into Egypt: and the idols of Egypt shall be moved at His presence* (Isaiah 19:1, cf. Jeremiah 43:12-13). When the divine refugees came to the city of Hermopolis (Cairo), they approached a pagan temple, and all the idols in that temple suddenly fell down and were shattered. St. Palladius writes of this in his Lausiac History: "We saw the pagan temple there, in which all the carved idols fell to the ground at the coming of the Savior." In a certain place called Sirin there were 365 idols. When the Most-holy Virgin entered that temple with the Divine Child in her arms, all these idols fell down and were shattered. All the idols throughout Egypt fell in the same manner. The Holy Prophet Jeremiah, living in Egypt in old age, had prophesied to the pagan priests of Egypt that all the idols would fall and all the graven images would be destroyed at the time when a Virgin Mother with a Child, born in a manger, would come to Egypt. The pagan priests remembered well this prophecy. In accordance with it, they carved out a representation of a Virgin as she lay on a bed and, next to her in a manger, her young Child wrapped in swaddling clothes; and they venerated this representation. King Ptolemy asked the pagan priests what this representation meant, and they replied that it was a mystery, foretold by a prophet to their fathers, and that they were awaiting the fulfilment of this mystery. And, indeed, this mystery was fulfilled, and revealed not only in Egypt but also in the entire world.

### **Contemplation**

Contemplate the wisdom of the Most-holy Virgin Mary:

1. How she spoke wisely with the angel of God (Luke 1:28-38);



2. How she pondered in her heart all that had happened at the birth of the Lord Jesus and all that was said of Him;
3. How, at Cana, she wisely told the servants to do whatever He told them.

**Homily:**  
**on the Most-holy Virgin, the Theotokos**

*My soul doth magnify the Lord (Luke 1:46).*

Brethren, we have in total only a few words spoken by the Most-holy Theotokos recorded in the Gospels. All of her words pertain to the magnification of God. She was silent before men but her soul conversed unceasingly with God. Every day and every hour, she found a new reason and incentive to magnify God. If only we were able to know and to record all her magnifications of God throughout her whole life, oh, how many books would it take! But, even by this one magnification, which she spoke before her kinswoman Elizabeth, the mother of the great Prophet and Forerunner John, every Christian can evaluate what a fragrant and God-pleasing flower was her most holy soul. This is but one wonderful canticle of the soul of the Theotokos, which has come down to us through the Gospel. However, such canticles were without number in the course of the life of the Most-blessed One. Even before she heard the Gospel from the lips of her Son, she knew how to speak with God and to glorify Him in accordance with the teaching of the Gospel. This knowledge came to her from the Holy Spirit of God, whose grace constantly poured into her like clear water into a pure vessel. Her soul magnified God with canticles throughout her whole life, and therefore God magnified her above the Cherubim and the Seraphim. Likewise, small and sinful as we are, the same Lord will magnify in His Kingdom us who magnify her, if we exert ourselves to fill this brief life with the magnification of God in our deeds, words, thoughts and prayers.

O Most-holy, Most-pure and Most-blessed Theotokos, cover us with the wings of thy prayers.  
**To thee and thy Son and our Lord be glory and praise forever. Amen.**



***The Morning Offering – Daily Inspiration with Abbott  
Tryphon***

**A Mass of Sinners**  
*Committed to living as the presence of Christ*

According to Saint Ephraim the Syrian (306 – 373), “The Church is not the assembly of saints, it is the mass of sinners who repent, who, sinners though they are, have turned towards God and are oriented towards Him.” As a people whose focus is on God, we are sinners who are committed to living as the presence of Christ in the world, and our holiness cannot be separated from the holiness of God at work in this world.

Our sin is a pervading sickness or failure to achieve the goal of being truly human. We are called to fulfill our Divine design and function as the created image of God. Our sin, therefore, does not merely imply guilt for violating God’s commandments, but must be the impetus for become something other than what we are in our fallen state. Because each of us has an experience that is unique, conquering our personal sinful habits requires all our attention and correction.

The ultimate goal of this salvific process is to become deified, which is simply to reflect the Divine likeness. By becoming Christ-like in our behavior and in our thinking, we cooperate with God in this healing process, and are returned to God’s likeness.

It is from this perspective that we recognize our vocation as being Christ in the midst of this fallen world. For this world, just as are we, is called into the process of divinization, and we, as Saint Seraphim of Sarov tells us, can cause the salvation of a thousand around us, by acquiring inner peace. As we acquire a

humble and contrite heart, we reveal Christ to the world, and promote the transformation of the whole of the Cosmos into the image and likeness of our Creator God.

With love in Christ,  
Abbot Tryphon



### *Coffee with Sister Vassa – Daily Reflection*

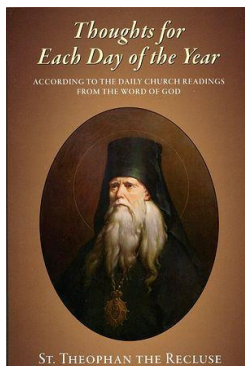
#### **Having Time for Him**

*“Then Jesus said to him, ‘Someone gave a great dinner and invited many. At the time for the dinner he sent his slave to say to those who had been invited, ‘Come; for everything is ready now.’ But they all alike began to make excuses. The first said to him, ‘I have bought a piece of land, and I must go out and see it; please accept my regrets.’ Another said, ‘I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I am going to try them out; please accept my regrets.’ Another said, ‘I have just been married, and therefore I cannot come.’ So the slave returned and reported this to his master. Then the owner of the house became angry and said to his slave, ‘Go out at once into the streets and lanes of the town and bring in the poor, the crippled, the blind, and the lame...’” (Lk 14: 16-21)*

So, not everybody has time for the kind of fellowship, food, and entertainment God has on offer at His dinner party. Only the poor, the crippled, the blind, and the lame end up coming – the ones with all the time in the world, and nowhere better to go. The “invited” ones politely decline, because they “have” matters, like work and family and romance, which require their wholehearted attention.

Does one need to be poor, or crippled, or blind, or lame to hear God’s call and “find time” for Him? Yes. This has been my experience, anyway. I need to be “*poor in spirit*,” and have “*a broken and humbled heart*” (Ps 50/51: 17). Perhaps ironically, for some of us the way to “a broken and humbled heart” is through a God-less dedication to work, family, or some relationship, romantic or otherwise. Without God in the picture, an intense dedication to a job or a relationship can leave me with a broken heart and emptiness. But this is my human condition without God in the first place, because I am not self-sufficient.

Whatever responsibilities or relationships I am engaging today, let me open them up to God’s nurturing word, taking time for His fellowship. It is made so accessible to me in the God-Man Jesus Christ, Who comes into my world in Bethlehem, to dine with the poor, crippled, blind, and lame. Today, once again, I bring my brokenness and emptiness to His table, to be healed and filled with His grace. “*Taste and see that the Lord is good; blessed is the man who trusts in him.*” (Ps 33/34: 8)



#### **Thirtieth Sunday After Pentecost. [Col. 3:4-11; Luke 17:12-19]**

The Holy Forefathers—these are truly great people! If one were to generalize the thought which defines their greatness, only those who fulfill God’s will for the human race—a positive will—are truly great, for there is much that happens only by God’s allowance. There are also powerful figures who act apart from God’s will and even against it. These too can seem great, but not in and of themselves—only according to those great counteractions which God’s Providence puts forth to efface the evil caused by them. We know God’s direct will concerning eternal salvation; but God’s plans concerning the temporal sojourn of people on the earth are hidden from us. That is why it is difficult for us to determine who acts more



straightly, or more precisely according to God's will. One can only acknowledge one negative criteria as true: He who acts against God's determination for the eternal salvation of people cannot be considered great, no matter how ostentatious his deeds; for it is evident that he is going against the obvious will of God. Though this known will does not concern temporal, but rather eternal things, it is doubtless that the one will of God cannot contradict another.

---

### *Daily Readings with Early Church Fathers and Mothers*

#### **"Infinite Care" by John Chrysostom**

Truly the symbol of the cross is considered despicable according to the world and among people. But in heaven and among the faithful, it is the highest glory. Poverty, too, is seen as despicable, but we boast in it. It is cheapened by the public and they laugh at it, but we are elated by it. In the same way, we boast in the cross. Paul doesn't say, "I boast not," or "I will not boast," but "Far be it from me that I should." It is as though he hates it, considers it absurd, and asks for God to help him avoid it.

But what is boasting in the cross? Boasting in the fact that Christ took on the form of a slave for my sake and suffered for me when I was the slave, the enemy, the unfeeling one. He loved me so much that He gave Himself over to a curse for me. What can compare to this? If servants only receive praise from their masters, who they are bound to kin by nature, and are elated by it, how much more must we boast when our Master, God Himself, isn't ashamed of the cross Christ endured for us. Therefore, we must not be ashamed of His unspeakable tenderness. He wasn't ashamed of being crucified for you - will you be ashamed to confess His infinite care for you?

---

### *The Philokalia: Daily Readings*

Do not treat your conscience with contempt, for it always advises you to do what is best. It sets before you the will of God and the angels; it frees you from the secret defilements of the heart; and when you depart this life it grants you the gift of intimacy with God.

- St Maximus the Confessor, 400 Chapters on Love

---





## December – 2015

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<b>29</b> 9:30 Sunday School 9:40 Hours 10:00 Divine Liturgy / Social	<b>30</b>	<b>1</b> 7:00-8:00pm – The Grey Book Step Mtg. NA Grp	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b> 8:00-9:15pm – Living Clean NA Group Mtg.	<b>5</b> 6:30 Vespers
<b>6</b> 9:40 Hours 9:45 Gen'l Confession 10:00 Divine Liturgy / Social <b>After Liturgy:</b> <b>Annual St.</b> <b>Nicholas Day</b> <b>Festivities</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b> 7:00-8:00pm – The Grey Book Step Mtg. NA Grp	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>11</b> 8:00-9:15pm – Living Clean NA Group Mtg.	<b>12</b> No Vespers <b>Mays Ldg. Open</b> <b>House 5:30 –</b> <b>8:30pm</b>
<b>13</b> 9:30 Sunday School 9:40 Hours 10:00 Divine Liturgy / Social <b>After Liturgy:</b> <b>Nativity Gift</b> <b>Basket Raffle</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>15</b> 7:00-8:00pm – The Grey Book Step Mtg. NA Grp	<b>16</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>18</b> 8:00-9:15pm – Living Clean NA Group Mtg.	<b>19</b> 6:30 Vespers
<b>20</b> 9:30 Sunday School 9:40 Hours 10:00 Divine Liturgy / Social 12:15 Council Mtg.	<b>21</b>	<b>22</b> 7:00-8:00pm – The Grey Book Step Mtg. NA Grp	<b>23</b>	<b>24</b> 7:00pm–Divine Liturgy/Christmas	<b>25</b> 8:00-9:15pm – Living Clean NA Group Mtg.	<b>26</b> 6:30 Vespers
<b>27</b> 9:30 Sunday School 9:40 Hours 10:00 Divine Liturgy/ Social	<b>28</b>	<b>29</b> 7:00-8:00pm – The Grey Book Step Mtg. NA Grp	<b>30</b>	<b>31</b>		