

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



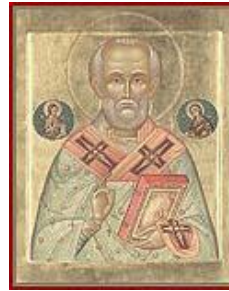
Sunday, December 6, 2015

Gospel: Luke 17:12-19

Tone 2

Epistle: Ephesians 6:10-17

27th Sunday after Pentecost (11th of Luke); St Nicholas the Wonderworker and Archbishop of Myra in Lycia



**Glory to
Jesus Christ!**

**Glory
Forever!**

*St Nicholas the
Wonderworker and
Archbishop of Myra in
Lycia*

*In truth you were revealed to your flock as a rule of faith,
an image of humility and a teacher of abstinence;
your humility exalted you; your poverty enriched you.
Hierarch Father Nicholas,
entreat Christ our God / that our souls may be saved.*

Today's Commemorated Feasts and Saints

27th Sunday After Pentecost — Tone 2. St. Nicholas the Wonderworker, Archbishop of Myra in Lycia (ca. 345) and St Maximus, Metropolitan of Kiev.

Weekly Bulletin Sponsors

For Health of:

Michael Guedes, on his birthday, offered by his family.

Anthony DaGrosa, on his birthday, offered by his family.

Father Steven & Matushka Emily Shuga, offered by Bill and Marianne.

Lore Stefy, offered by Church Council. Sisterhood and parishioners of Orthodox Church Mother of God.

For Memory of:

Matushka Barbara Stashkevetch, fell asleep in the Lord unexpectedly on Wednesday, December 2, 2015 (Baltimore, MD) offered by OCA.

Congratulations:

Peter von Berg, tonsured a Reader, by His Eminence, Archbishop Michael, on Sunday, November 29, in Christ the Savior Church, New York City, offered by the Diocese of NY/NJ. *May God grant the newly tonsured Reader Peter many blessed years! "Mnogaya Lyeta!"*

Liturgical Schedule:

Sunday, Sunday, December 6th

9:30 am: No Sunday School
9:40 am: Hours
9:45 am: General Confession
10:00 am: Divine Liturgy
After Liturgy: Annual St. Nicholas Day Festivities

Saturday, December 12th

5:30 – 8:30 pm: Open House
No Vespers

Sunday, December 13th

9:30 am: Sunday School
9:40 am: Hours
10:00 am: Divine Liturgy
After Liturgy: Nativity Gift Basket Raffle

Saturday, December 19th

6:30 pm: Vespers

Sunday, December 20th

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

Readings:

Epistle: Ephesians 6:10-17

BRETHREN, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we are not contending against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world rulers of this present darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore take the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand, therefore, having girded your loins with truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the equipment of the gospel of peace; besides all these, taking the shield of faith, with which you can quench all the flaming darts of the evil

one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

Gospel: Luke 17:12-19 (11th Sunday of Luke)

At that time, as Jesus entered a village, He was met by ten lepers, who stood at a distance and lifted up their voices and said: "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us." When He saw them He said to them, "Go and show yourselves to the priests." And as they went they were cleansed. Then one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, praising God with a loud voice; and he fell on his face at Jesus's feet, giving Him thanks. Now he was a Samaritan. Then said Jesus: "Were not ten cleansed? Where are the nine? Was no one found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?" And He said to him: "Rise and go your way; your faith has made you well."

NO OTHER LABOR IS AS DIFFICULT AS PRAYER TO GOD.

EVERY TIME A PERSON WANTS TO PRAY,
OUR SPIRITUAL ENEMIES WANT TO COME AND DISRUPT IT,
FOR THEY KNOW THAT IT IS ONLY BY DEFLECTING HUMANS
FROM PRAYER THAT THEY CAN DO THEM ANY HARM.

~ ABBA AGATHON (4TH CENTURY)



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 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:

Bulletin@ChurchMotherOfGod.org

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

There will be a parish council meeting December 20th immediately following coffee hour.

"On Sunday December 6th the parish will celebrate our annual St. Nicholas Day festivities. Children are invited to help decorate the tree in our community room after the Liturgy. Pizza will be served "to the children" and a visit from St. Nicholas is expected. If you wish to have your child participate, please see Maribeth Romanofsky."

Rather than collecting money for Nativity flowers this year, each parishioner is asked to bring in one poinsettia plant to help decorate our church. Please have your poinsettia plants in by Dec. 6th. Thank you.

Dear OCMoG Parishioners & Friends,

Glory to Jesus Christ!

We are in the thick of the Nativity Fast and preparations for the Birth of Christ. Cookies are stacking up in the freezer. The house, inside and out, is decorated. Gifts are being purchased, wrapped, hidden and in some cases donated to Toys for Tots or other worthy organizations. The change from our purchase often finds its way into worthy red kettles.

As you prayerfully review your year-end-giving, please remember your parish. We are \$1,713.44 in the red (income versus expenses) and approximately \$4,500 short of our 2015 budget of \$31,000. Perhaps you might consider an additional gift of \$50.00.

Whatever choice is made, may God be glorified!

"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!" Troparion of the Pre-Feast of the Nativity of Christ

Merry Christmas!

Trudy Ellmore/Parish Council President

"On Saturday December 12th 5:30 – 8:30pm, Mays Landing Open House. Our parish will be participating again this year. Come out and join us as we welcome visitors to our church home. There will be no vespers."

Christmas Divine Liturgy will be held at 7:00pm on the 24th of December (Christmas Eve).



Sisterhood of the Protector of the Mother of God: Announcements

"The Sisterhood will be raffling off a Nativity gift basket on December 13th. Tickets are \$1.00, and each family is asked to sell ten tickets. Please see Lore Stefy for tickets. If you wish to contribute an item to the basket, there is a list posted downstairs regarding items needed."



NY/NJ Diocese News

THANK-YOU: An Invitation to Join the DDB - 12/02/15

The final month of 2015 is upon us! It has been a blessed and fruitful year of supporting our seminarians, our mission parishes, and providing support in revitalizing our older parishes. All of this is made a reality thanks to the sacrificial financial contributions of our Distinguished Diocesan Benefactors (DDB). To date there are 224 individual and organizational DDBs. An invitation is extended for you to join them this year as we seek to achieve our goal ... and support essential ministries in our diocese.



**This year, DDBs
have contributed**

\$ 102,000.00

Thank-You!

**Here's your invitation to
join them and help us
reach our goal this year!**



Orthodox Church in America (OCA) News

OCA represented at celebration of Feast of St. Andrew in Constantinople

Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew presides at festal Liturgy in St. George Patriarchal Cathedral.

At the invitation of His All-Holiness, Ecumenical Patriarchate Bartholomew and with the blessing of His Beatitude, Metropolitan Tikhon, Archpriest Alexander Rentel, Assistant Professor of Canon Law and the John and Paraskeva Skvir Lecturer in Practical Theology at [Saint Vladimir's Seminary](#), Yonkers, NY, represented the Orthodox Church in America at the celebration of the Feast of the Apostle Andrew the First-Called, the Ecumenical Patriarchate's thronal feast, on Monday, November 30, 2015.

“It was a great honor that the Orthodox Church in America was able to be present for this feast and a personal honor for me to concelebrate the feast with His All-Holiness,” said Father Alexander, who served at the festal Divine Liturgy with Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, members of the Holy Synod of the Church of Constantinople, the Grand Archimandrite Bessarion, the patriarchal deacons and others. “Representatives of other churches were in attendance, as was a delegation from the Roman Catholic Church headed by His Eminence, Kurt Cardinal Koch and His Eminence, Reinhard Cardinal Marx.”

Father Alexander conveyed to His All-Holiness the personal greetings of Metropolitan Tikhon and expressed gratitude for his gracious invitation, the text of which appears below.

Greeting of His Beatitude, Metropolitan Tikhon to His All-Holiness, Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew The Feast of the Apostle Andrew the First-Called

November 29, 2015 No. 11/013

His All Holiness Bartholomew

Archbishop of Constantinople-New Rome and Ecumenical Patriarch

Your All-Holiness, Esteemed and Beloved Concelebrant in the Holy Mysteries:

We greet Your All-Holiness with much joy on the Feast of All-Praised Apostle Andrew the First-Called, whose heart was enlightened with the perfect brightness of the divinity of Christ. As the thronal celebration of the See of Constantinople, this feast brings us to mindfulness of the service of Your All-Holiness as Archbishop of Constantinople-New Rome and Ecumenical Patriarch. The same light of Christ that enlightened the Holy Apostle Andrew illumines Your All-Holiness in Your apostolic mission and patriarchal ministry.

As the Apostle Andrew caught men with the net of his preaching and delivered all nations from the depths of error, so we pray that the See of Constantinople under Your guidance will continue his great and laudable apostolic work for the benefit of all the Holy Orthodox churches and for the well-being of all humanity.

We are grateful for the invitation to have Archpriest Alexander Rentel represent us for the liturgical services on this great feast and to share with Your All-Holiness our sincere best wishes for a grace-filled celebration.

With heartfelt brotherly love and care, I remain,

† Metropolitan Tikhon

Primate

Orthodox Church in America



Share in a Journey of Faith!

Now is a critical time to be involved in missions and we need you to help us find hard working volunteers to do the work of our Lord.

As you know, participating on an OCMC Mission Team is a life-changing experience. It allows one to make a difference. The insights gained and lessons learned in this cross-cultural ministry will change one's outlook on the world and can only be had through personal experience.

Orthodox Mission Teams in 2016 will travel to **Alaska, Albania, Guatemala, Indonesia, Kenya, Mexico** and **Uganda**. There are openings for *all* Orthodox Christians to bear witness to the Holy Orthodox Faith in action by offering their time, talent, and service to mission work. Families are welcomed to participate on certain Teams.

Please pass this information along and ask your priest if you (or he) can make a presentation about these opportunities. Applications and details can be downloaded at <http://www.ocmc.org>. Let us know if you need any additional information (*make sure information available for your parish mailings, brochure racks, information table, ministry mailboxes, etc*).

Thank you for your continuous support and prayers for the mission work of our Holy Orthodox Church.

In HIS service,

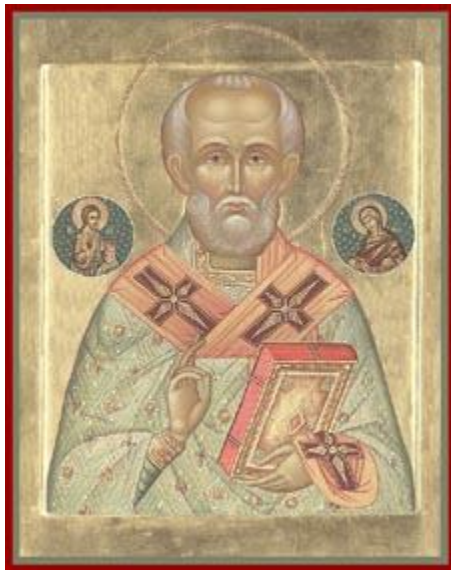
Andrew J. Lekos
Mission Teams Director

Join an OCMC Short-Term Teaching Team in 2016

Orthodox Mission Teams empower the Church at home and abroad by working, witnessing, worshipping, and making disciples. Help in the efforts to educate and encourage mission communities around the world in the Orthodox Faith by teaching catechists, youth and young adults, clergy, and other church leaders.

In 2016, the opportunities to be "messengers who bring good news" are available on Orthodox Mission Teams to Mexico, Albania, Indonesia, and Kenya. Team applications and additional opportunities are available online at www.ocmc.org, or by calling OCMC at 1-877-463-6787 (ext. 142).

***St Nicholas the Wonderworker and
Archbishop of Myra in Lycia***



Saint Nicholas, the Wonderworker, Archbishop of Myra in Lycia is famed as a great saint pleasing unto God. He was born in the city of Patara in the region of Lycia (on the south coast of the Asia Minor peninsula), and was the only son of pious parents Theophanes and Nonna, who had vowed to dedicate him to God. As the fruit of the prayer of his childless parents, the infant Nicholas from the very day of his birth revealed to people the light of his future glory as a wonderworker. His mother, Nonna, after giving birth was immediately healed from illness. The newborn infant, while still in the baptismal font, stood on his feet three hours, without support from anyone, thereby honoring the Most Holy Trinity. St Nicholas from his infancy began a life of fasting, and on Wednesdays and Fridays he would not accept milk from his mother until after his parents had finished their evening prayers.

From his childhood Nicholas thrived on the study of Divine Scripture; by day he would not leave church, and by night he prayed and read books, making himself a worthy dwelling place for the Holy Spirit. Bishop Nicholas of Patara rejoiced at the spiritual success and deep piety of his nephew. He ordained him a reader, and then elevated Nicholas to the priesthood, making him

his assistant and entrusting him to instruct the flock.

In serving the Lord the youth was fervent of spirit, and in his proficiency with questions of faith he was like an Elder, who aroused the wonder and deep respect of believers. Constantly at work and vivacious, in unceasing prayer, the priest Nicholas displayed great kind-heartedness towards the flock, and towards the afflicted who came to him for help, and he distributed all his inheritance to the poor.

There was a certain formerly rich inhabitant of Patara, whom St Nicholas saved from great sin. The man had three grown daughters, and in desperation he planned to sell their bodies so they would have money for food. The saint, learning of the man's poverty and of his wicked intention, secretly visited him one night and threw a sack of gold through the window. With the money the man arranged an honorable marriage for his daughter. St Nicholas also provided gold for the other daughters, thereby saving the family from falling into spiritual destruction. In bestowing charity, St Nicholas always strove to do this secretly and to conceal his good deeds.

The Bishop of Patara decided to go on pilgrimage to the holy places at Jerusalem, and entrusted the guidance of his flock to St Nicholas, who fulfilled this obedience carefully and with love. When the bishop returned, Nicholas asked his blessing for a pilgrimage to the Holy Land. Along the way the saint predicted a storm would arise and threaten the ship. St Nicholas saw the devil get on the ship, intending to sink it and kill all the passengers. At the entreaty of the despairing pilgrims, he calmed the waves of the sea by his prayers. Through his prayer a certain sailor of the ship, who had fallen from the mast and was mortally injured was also restored to health.

When he reached the ancient city of Jerusalem and came to Golgotha, St Nicholas gave thanks to the Savior. He went to all the holy places, worshiping at each one. One night on Mount Sion, the closed doors of the church opened by themselves for the great pilgrim. Going round the holy places connected with the earthly service of the Son of God, St Nicholas decided to withdraw into the desert, but he was stopped

by a divine voice urging him to return to his native country. He returned to Lycia, and yearning for a life of quietude, the saint entered into the brotherhood of a monastery named Holy Sion, which had been founded by his uncle. But the Lord again indicated another path for him, “Nicholas, this is not the vineyard where you shall bear fruit for Me. Return to the world, and glorify My Name there.” So he left Patara and went to Myra in Lycia.

Upon the death of Archbishop John, Nicholas was chosen as Bishop of Myra after one of the bishops of the Council said that a new archbishop should be revealed by God, not chosen by men. One of the elder bishops had a vision of a radiant Man, Who told him that the one who came to the church that night and was first to enter should be made archbishop. He would be named Nicholas. The bishop went to the church at night to await Nicholas. The saint, always the first to arrive at church, was stopped by the bishop. “What is your name, child?” he asked. God’s chosen one replied, “My name is Nicholas, Master, and I am your servant.”

After his consecration as archbishop, St Nicholas remained a great ascetic, appearing to his flock as an image of gentleness, kindness and love for people. This was particularly precious for the Lycian Church during the persecution of Christians under the emperor Diocletian (284-305). Bishop Nicholas, locked up in prison together with other Christians for refusing to worship idols, sustained them and exhorted them to endure the fetters, punishment and torture. The Lord preserved him unharmed. Upon the accession of St Constantine (May 21) as emperor, St Nicholas was restored to his flock, which joyfully received their guide and intercessor.

Despite his great gentleness of spirit and purity of heart, St Nicholas was a zealous and ardent warrior of the Church of Christ. Fighting evil spirits, the saint made the rounds of the pagan temples and shrines in the city of Myra and its surroundings, shattering the idols and turning the temples to dust.

In the year 325 St Nicholas was a participant in the First Ecumenical Council. This Council proclaimed the Nicean Symbol of Faith, and he stood up against the heretic Arius with the likes of Sts Sylvester the Bishop of Rome (January 2),

Alexander of Alexandria (May 29), Spyridon of Trimythontos (December 12) and other Fathers of the Council.

St Nicholas, fired with zeal for the Lord, assailed the heretic Arius with his words, and also struck him upon the face. For this reason, he was deprived of the emblems of his episcopal rank and placed under guard. But several of the holy Fathers had the same vision, seeing the Lord Himself and the Mother of God returning to him the Gospel and omophorion. The Fathers of the Council agreed that the audacity of the saint was pleasing to God, and restored the saint to the office of bishop.

Having returned to his own diocese, the saint brought it peace and blessings, sowing the word of Truth, uprooting heresy, nourishing his flock with sound doctrine, and also providing food for their bodies.

Even during his life the saint worked many miracles. One of the greatest was the deliverance from death of three men unjustly condemned by the Governor, who had been bribed. The saint boldly went up to the executioner and took his sword, already suspended over the heads of the condemned. The Governor, denounced by St Nicholas for his wrong doing, repented and begged for forgiveness.

Witnessing this remarkable event were three military officers, who were sent to Phrygia by the emperor Constantine to put down a rebellion. They did not suspect that soon they would also be compelled to seek the intercession of St Nicholas. Evil men slandered them before the emperor, and the officers were sentenced to death. Appearing to St Constantine in a dream, St Nicholas called on him to overturn the unjust sentence of the military officers.

He worked many other miracles, and struggled many long years at his labor. Through the prayers of the saint, the city of Myra was rescued from a terrible famine. He appeared to a certain Italian merchant and left him three gold pieces as a pledge of payment. He requested him to sail to Myra and deliver grain there. More than once, the saint saved those drowning in the sea, and provided release from captivity and imprisonment.

Having reached old age, St Nicholas peacefully fell asleep in the Lord. His venerable relics were preserved incorrupt in the local

cathedral church and flowed with curative myrrh, from which many received healing. In the year 1087, his relics were transferred to the Italian city of Bari, where they rest even now (See May 9).

The name of the great saint of God, the hierarch and wonderworker Nicholas, a speedy helper and suppliant for all hastening to him, is famed in every corner of the earth, in many lands and among many peoples. In Russia there are a multitude of cathedrals, monasteries and churches consecrated in his name. There is, perhaps, not a single city without a church dedicated to him.

The first Russian Christian prince Askold (+ 882) was baptized in 866 by Patriarch Photius (February 6) with the name Nicholas. Over the grave of Askold, St Olga (July 11) built the first temple of St Nicholas in the Russian Church at Kiev. Primary cathedrals were dedicated to St Nicholas at Izborsk, Ostrov, Mozhaisk, and Zarsk. At Novgorod the Great, one of the main churches of the city, the Nikolo-Dvorischensk church, later became a cathedral.

Famed and venerable churches and monasteries dedicated to St Nicholas are found at Kiev, Smolensk, Pskov, Toropetsa, Galich, Archangelsk, Great Ustiug, Tobolsk. Moscow had dozens of churches named for the saint, and also three monasteries in the Moscow diocese: the Nikolo-Greek (Staryi) in the Chinese-quarter, the Nikolo-Perervinsk and the Nikolo-Ugreshsk. One of the chief towers of the Kremlin was named the Nikolsk.

Many of the churches devoted to the saint were those established at market squares by Russian merchants, sea-farers and those who traveled by land, venerating the wonderworker Nicholas as a protector of all those journeying on dry land and sea. They sometimes received the name among the people of “Nicholas soaked.”

Many village churches in Russia were dedicated to the wonderworker Nicholas, venerated by peasants as a merciful intercessor before the Lord for all the people in their work. And in the Russian land St Nicholas did not cease his intercession. Ancient Kiev preserves the memory about the miraculous rescue of a drowning infant by the saint. The great wonderworker, hearing the grief-filled prayers

of the parents for the loss of their only child, took the infant from the waters, revived him and placed him in the choir-loft of the church of Holy Wisdom (Hagia Sophia) before his wonderworking icon. In the morning the infant was found safe by his thrilled parents, praising St Nicholas the Wonderworker.

Many wonderworking icons of St Nicholas appeared in Russia and came also from other lands. There is the ancient Byzantine embroidered image of the saint, brought to Moscow from Novgorod, and the large icon painted in the thirteenth century by a Novgorod master.

Two depictions of the wonderworker are especially numerous in the Russian Church: St Nicholas of Zarsk, portrayed in full-length, with his right hand raised in blessing and with a Gospel (this image was brought to Ryazan in 1225 by the Byzantine Princess Eupraxia, the future wife of Prince Theodore. She perished in 1237 with her husband and infant son during the incursion of Batu); and St Nicholas of Mozhaisk, also in full stature, with a sword in his right hand and a city in his left. This recalls the miraculous rescue of the city of Mozhaisk from an invasion of enemies, through the prayers of the saint. It is impossible to list all the grace-filled icons of St Nicholas, or to enumerate all his miracles.

St Nicholas is the patron of travelers, and we pray to him for deliverance from floods, poverty, or any misfortunes. He has promised to help those who remember his parents, Theophanes and Nonna.

St Nicholas is also commemorated on May 9 (The transfer of his relics) and on July 29 (his nativity).

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

Love makes me God, and You, O God, man.

Where there is one, there is no love. Where there are two united there is only a semblance of love. Where three are united, there is love. Your name is love because Your name is trinity in Unity.

If You were solitary, You would not be love but hatred.

If You were a duality, You would be an alternation of love and hatred. But You are a trinity, and therefore You are love, and in You there is neither darkness nor alternation.

Love knows neither time nor space. It is outside of time and outside of space. For love one day is like a thousand years and a thousand years like one day.

When I am united with You in love, neither heaven nor earth exists--only God exists. No "you" or "I" exists--only God exists.

Love has three hypostases: chastity, knowledge, and light. Without chastity love is not affection but selfishness and passion. Without knowledge love is not affection but selfishness and passion. Without knowledge love is not wisdom but foolishness. Without light love is not power but weakness. When passion, foolishness, and weakness combine, they become hell, which is what Satan likes to call "love."

When my soul is a most pure virgin, and my conscience is keen-sighted wisdom, and my spirit is life-giving light, I am a love that coincides with Your love. Through love I see You in myself, and You see me in Yourself.

Through love I do not see myself but only You. Through love You do not see Yourself but only me.

Love sacrifices itself, and does not feel that the sacrifice is giving but rather receiving.

My worldly children: the word "love" is the deepest prayer of all.

"Does worldly love not exist?" my neighbors ask me. "To the same extent that a worldly God exists," I answer. "Worldly love burns and burns out, Heavenly love burns without burning out. Worldly love, like everything worldly, is only a dream and semblance of love. Your love resembles divine love the way smoke resembles flames.

"When you exchange a gold coin for copper pennies, you do not call the pennies a gold coin but copper pennies. Why then do you call divine love that has been broken and ground into ashes by time and space 'love' and not 'ashes'?"

O Lord, make me worthy of the love, by which You live and give life.

Make me worthy of Your love, O Lord, and I shall be free of all laws.

Move Your love into me, and love will move me into You.

Sayings of the Ascetics of the Orthodox Church, XXXIII:

Unbelief

Falsehood - and only falsehood - separates us from God ... False thoughts, false words, false feelings, false desires - Behold the aggregate of lies that leads us to non-being, illusion, and rejection of God.

St. Nicholas of Serbia, Thoughts on Good and Evil

The Prologue of Ohrid

St. Nikolai Velimirovic

1. Saint Nicholas the Wonderworker, Archbishop of Myra in Lycia

This glorious saint, celebrated even today throughout the entire world, was the only son of his eminent and wealthy parents, Theophanes and Nona, citizens of the city of Patara in Lycia. Since he was the only son bestowed on them by God, the parents returned the gift to God by dedicating their son to Him. St. Nicholas learned of the spiritual life from his uncle Nicholas, Bishop of Patara, and was tonsured a monk in the Monastery of New Zion founded by his uncle. Following the death of his parents, Nicholas distributed all his inherited goods to the poor, not keeping anything for himself. As a priest in Patara, he was known for his charity, even though he carefully concealed his

charitable works, fulfilling the words of the Lord: *Let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth* (Matthew 6:3). When he gave himself over to solitude and silence, thinking to live that way until his death, a voice from on high came to him: "Nicholas, for your ascetic labor, work among the people, if thou desirest to be crowned by Me." Immediately after that, by God's wondrous providence, he was chosen archbishop of the city of Myra in Lycia. Merciful, wise and fearless, Nicholas was a true shepherd to his flock. During the persecution of Christians under Diocletian and Maximian, he was cast into prison, but even there he instructed the people in the Law of God. He was present at the First Ecumenical Council of Nicaea [325] and, out of great zeal for the truth, struck the heretic Arius with his hand. For this act he was removed from the Council and from his archiepiscopal duties, until the Lord Christ Himself and the Most-holy Theotokos appeared to several of the chief hierarchs and revealed their approval of Nicholas. A defender of God's truth, this wonderful saint was ever bold as a defender of justice among the people.

On two occasions, he saved three men from an undeserved sentence of death. Merciful, truthful, and a lover of justice, he walked among the people as an angel of God. Even during his lifetime, the people considered him a saint and invoked his aid in difficulties and in distress. He appeared both in dreams and in person to those who called upon him, and he helped them easily and speedily, whether close at hand or far away. A light shone from his face as it did from the face of Moses, and he, by his presence alone, brought comfort, peace and good will among men. In old age he became ill for a short time and entered into the rest of the Lord, after a life full of labor and very fruitful toil, to rejoice eternally in the Kingdom of Heaven, continuing to help the faithful on earth by his miracles and to glorify his God. He entered into rest on December 6, 343 A.D.

2. Saint Nicholas, Bishop of Patara

Nicholas was the uncle of the great St. Nicholas, and it was he who guided him to the spiritual life and ordained him a priest.

3. The Holy Martyr Nicholas Karamos

Nicholas was cruelly tortured for the Christian Faith by the Turks and was hanged in Smyrna in the year 1657 A.D.

4. Saint Theophiulus, Bishop of Antioch

A man well educated in Hellenic philosophy, Theophilus, after reading the Holy Scriptures, was baptized and became a great defender of the Christian Faith. His work "On the Faith" is preserved even today. He governed the Church of Antioch for thirteen years and entered into rest in the year 181 A.D.

Hymn of Praise

Saint Nicholas the Wonderworker, Archbishop of Myra in Lycia

Holy Father Nicholas,
The four corners of the world glorify you
As a knight of the powerful Faith,
The Faith of God, the true Faith.
From the cradle he was devoted to God,
From the cradle until the end;
And God glorified him--
His faithful Nicholas.
Famous was he throughout his life,
And even more renowned after death;
Mighty on earth was he,
And even more mighty is he in heaven.
Glowing spirit, pure heart,
He was a temple of the Living God;
For this the people glorify him
As a wondrous saint.
Nicholas, rich in glory,
Loves those who honor him as their "Krsna Slava";
Before the throne of the eternal God,
He prays for their good.
O Nicholas, bless us,
Bless your people
Who, before God and before you,
Humbly stand in prayer.

Reflection

In icons of St. Nicholas, the Lord Savior is usually depicted on one side with a Gospel in His hands, and the Most-holy Virgin Theotokos

is depicted on the other side with an episcopal omophorion in her hands. This has a twofold historical significance: first, it signifies the calling of Nicholas to the hierarchical office, and second, it signifies his exoneration from the condemnation that followed his confrontation with Arius. St. Methodius, Patriarch of Constantinople, writes: "One night St. Nicholas saw our Savior in glory, standing by him and extending to him the Gospel, adorned with gold and pearls. On his other side, he saw the Theotokos, who was placing the episcopal pallium on his shoulders." Shortly after this vision, John the Archbishop of Myra died and St. Nicholas was appointed archbishop of that city. That was the first incident. The second incident occurred at the time of the First Ecumenical Council in Nicaea. Unable to stop Arius through reason from espousing the irrational blasphemy against the Son of God and His Most-holy Mother, St. Nicholas struck Arius on the face with his hand. The Holy Fathers at the Council, protesting such an action, banned Nicholas from the Council and deprived him of all emblems of the episcopal rank. That same night, several of the Holy Fathers saw an identical vision: how the Lord Savior and the Most-holy Theotokos were standing around St. Nicholas--on one side the Lord Savior with the Gospel, and on the other side the Most-holy Theotokos with a pallium, presenting the saint with the episcopal emblems that had been removed from him. Seeing this, the fathers were awestruck and quickly returned to Nicholas that which had been removed. They began to respect him as a great chosen one of God, and they interpreted his actions against Arius not as an act of unreasonable anger, but rather an expression of great zeal for God's truth.

Contemplation

Contemplate the sinful fall of Adam and Eve (Genesis 3):

1. How God cursed the serpent;
2. How He imposed upon Eve the pain of child-bearing and on Adam the burden of toil;
3. How He cursed the ground in the works of man;

4. How He did not curse ground as ground but rather *in thy works,*^{*)} i.e., in the works of man.

Homily:

on the absence of sin in the works of God

And God saw that it was good (Genesis 1).

Brethren, everything that was created, and the means by which the pure and sinless God created it, is pure and sinless. Every creature of God is pure and sinless as long as it is turned toward God, as long as it is neither separated from God nor hostile to God. Every creature of itself praises and glorifies God as long as it is pure and sinless. That is why the Psalmist sings: *Let everything that hath breath praise the Lord. Alleluia!* (Psalm 150:6). Every intelligent creature of God feels that its natural and primary purpose is to praise the Lord. Thus, brethren, people ask: "If this is so, from whence comes evil into the world?" It comes from sin, and only from sin. Sin changed a bright angel into a devil. The devil willingly made himself a vessel of sin and then hurried to make other creatures of God similar vessels. By their own free choice, other angels consented to sin with the devil, and afterward the first people, Eve and Adam, consented. From this proceeded the mixture of good and evil in the world. However, even today, that which is of God in creation is good, as it was in the first days of creation. Poison came from sin, for sin is indeed poison, the most bitter poison that exists. Sin was the cause of the curse. It brought about the darkening of minds and caused created things to become hostile toward their Creator. It distanced man from God, and man from man, and man from nature, and nature from man. O my brethren, all that comes from God is good, and all that comes from sin is evil. No evil exists that is bound to God, and there exists no kind of evil that is not bound to sin. Many philosophers have examined the essence of evil, and because of their crude minds they have asserted that evil is in matter and that matter is evil. However, only we Christians know that sin is the essence of evil and that evil has no essence other than sin. It is obvious from this that if we desire to protect ourselves from evil, we must protect ourselves from sin.

O sinless God, help us to protect ourselves from sin and the corruption of sin.

To Thee be glory and praise forever. Amen.

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



Discovering God

The importance of discovering God for oneself

At the age of seventy find myself spending an increasing amount of time on area campuses, and hosting a growing number of young people making a pilgrimage to the monastery. At an age when many of my contemporaries are grandfathers, or even great grandfathers, I've discovered the truth of something I read about while still a college student. Grandparents are often more sympathetic to the burdens and challenges that young people face than their own parents. Age seems to mellow us out and make us more sympathetic to the challenges young people face. We become less judgmental because we've been down the same road and know that, in the end, these young people will come out just fine.

Some time ago I had the mother of a boy of about thirteen arrive at the monastery, son in tow. She was upset because her son had declared himself an atheist and she was afraid he was in danger of eternal damnation. I sat down with the boy and told him that each one of us has to come to a personal awareness of the reality of God for ourselves. Doubting the existence of God, I told him, is all part of building a personal relationship with God. If we simply go through the motions without seeking a real relationship, we might as well be atheists. My own youth was

filled with great spiritual struggle, as I sought to fill the void I felt within my heart.

Most young people struggle with questions about things eternal. It is part of relationship building. Like the young lad who visited with his mom, I struggled with doubt. The only difference was that my struggle happened during my college days. It was a period of time when I was filled with anxiety about the future, and fearful of making the wrong decisions. I understand the issues facing young people today because I was a young man with the same fears, and struggling with many of the same issues.

Knowing as I do now the importance of being honest, I told the mother to let her son explore for himself the reality of God. It was better for him to question the existence of God than to simply feign belief. At the same time I told the boy he needed to attend church with his family because it was important to be obedient to his parents and supportive of his younger brother. After all, one does not tell his parents that he's not going to attend school just because he doesn't see his studies as important.

The God this boy was rejecting was the very false image of God that I have long rejected. The God I have come to know personally is not the same god I rejected in my youth. The God revealed in Jesus Christ is the One Whom I've personally experienced and Who first sought me out.

If we are to have a personal relationship with God we must be open and honest and unafraid to question. The Lord wants us to be real with Him. Like the sound relationship that one sees in a long and successful marriage, a relationship with God must first and foremost be based in honesty and truth. Love and trust come with time and experience. Our relationship with God is something that builds over time, like all good relationships, results in a sense of peace.

It is this peace and joy that I want to impart to young people. My personal relationship with Christ is something that I want to share, and not just with Orthodox youth may make a pilgrimage to the monastery. I KNOW God exists because I've experienced His great love in a personal way, and it is this certainty of the reality of God that leads me to reach out to the college students, and faculty, of the Puget Sound's area colleges and universities. They,

like me, need to discover God for themselves, and build upon a relationship that began with their conception.

With love in Christ,
Abbot Tryphon

Coffee with Sister Vassa – Daily Reflection



Welcoming Him

“Then they came to Capernaum; and when he was in the house he asked them, ‘What were you arguing about on the way?’ But they were silent, for on the way they had argued with one another who was the greatest. He sat down, called the twelve, and said to them, ‘Whoever wants to be first must be last of all and servant of all.’ Then he took a little child and put it among them; and taking it in his arms, he said to them, ‘Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes not me but the one who sent me.’” (Mk 9: 33-37)

As Christ offers me this gentle lesson about greatness, He not only talks about service, about being “the last of all” and “the servant of all.” He also talks about child-like simplicity, likening Himself to a little child. Greatness, in His eyes, is both in being of service, and in simply welcoming even the smallest of human beings.

Let me turn things around today, as I continue to prepare to welcome a child; the Child born in Bethlehem. Today let me take a step back from my neediness and expectations or demands of others, and see how I can be of service; and

simply be welcoming. Because ultimately, the Nativity Fast and Advent are about preparing a welcome. That is, preparing the heart to soften and open to His coming.

I am helped in this process by other people, great and small, who come my way, when I put them first in any way I can. Today I ask God to clear away any rubble of neediness and expectations, and fill my heart with the grace of His Spirit, of service and simplicity.

The Philokalia: Daily Readings

An intelligent use of conceptual images and their corresponding physical objects produces self-restraint, love and spiritual knowledge; an unintelligent use produces licentiousness, hatred and ignorance.

- St Maximos the Confessor, 400 Chapters on Love



December – 2015

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