

*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, February 28, 2016**

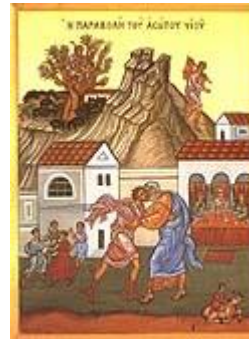
Gospel: Luke 15:11-32

**Tone 6**

Epistle: I Corinthians 6:12-20

*Sunday of the Prodigal Son: 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday Before Lent*

**Glory to  
Jesus Christ!**



*Sunday of the Prodigal  
Son*

**Glory  
Forever!**

*I have recklessly forgotten Your glory, O Father; and among sinners  
I have scattered the riches which You had given me. Therefore, I cry to You  
like the Prodigal: "I have sinned before You, O compassionate Father;  
receive me a penitent and make me as one of Your hired servants."*

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

**Sunday of the Prodigal Son — Tone 6.** Ven. Basil the Confessor, Companion of Ven. Procopius at Decapolis (750). Bl. Nikolai, Fool-for-Christ at Pskov (1576). Hieromartyr Proterius, Patriarch of Alexandria (457). Hieromartyr Nestor, Bishop of Magydos in Pamphylia (250). Ven. Marina (Marana), Cyra (Kira) and Domnica (Domnina), of Syria (ca. 450).

People will always have  
an opinion about you.

But you live your life  
for The Lord, not  
people.

### *Liturgical Schedule:*

#### **Sunday, February 28<sup>th</sup>**

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

#### **Saturday, March 5<sup>th</sup>**

6:30 pm: Vespers

#### **Sunday, March 6<sup>th</sup>**

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

#### **Saturday, March 12<sup>th</sup>**

6:30 pm: Vespers

#### **Sunday, March 13<sup>th</sup>**

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

#### **Wednesday, March 16<sup>th</sup>**

6:30 pm: Presanctified  
Liturgy

#### **Saturday, March 19<sup>th</sup>**

6:30 pm: Vespers

#### **Sunday, March 20<sup>th</sup>**

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

#### **Wednesday, March 23<sup>rd</sup>**

6:30 pm: Presanctified  
Liturgy

### *Bulletin Sponsors:*

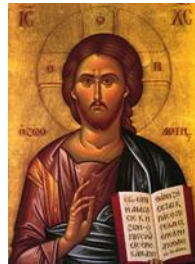
*No Sponsors*

### *Readings:*



**Epistle:** I Corinthians 6:12-20

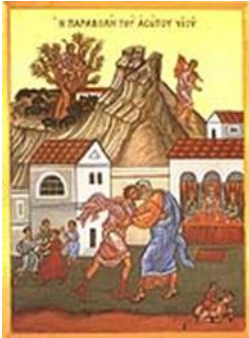
**Brethren,** "all things are lawful for me," but not all things are helpful. "All things are lawful for me," but I will not be enslaved by anything. "Food is meant for the stomach and the stomach for food" -- and God will destroy both one and the other. The body is not meant for immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. And God raised the Lord and will also raise us up by his power. Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I therefore take the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? Never! Do you not know that he who joins himself to a prostitute becomes one body with her? For, as it is written, "The two shall become one flesh." But he who is united to the Lord becomes one spirit with him. Shun immorality. Every other sin which a man commits is outside the body; but the immoral man sins against his own body. Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, which you have from God? You are not your own; you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body and in your spirit which belong to God.



**Gospel:** Luke 15:11-32

**The Lord said this parable:** "There was a man who had two sons; and the younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the share of the property that falls to me.' And he divided his living between them. Not many days later, the younger son gathered all he had and took his journey into a far country, and there he squandered his property in loose living. And when he had spent everything, a great famine arose in that country, and he began to be in want. So he went and joined himself to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him into his fields to feed swine. And he would gladly have fed on the pods that the swine ate; and no one gave him anything. But when he came to himself he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have bread enough and to spare, but I perish here with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and I will say to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son; treat me as one of your hired servants.' And he arose and came to his father. But while he was yet at a distance, his father saw him and had compassion, and ran and embraced him and kissed him. And the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son.' But the father said to his servants, 'Bring quickly the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet; and bring the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and make merry; for this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.' And they began to make merry.

Now his elder son was in the field; and as he came and drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing. And he called one of the servants and asked what this meant. And he said to him, 'Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fatted calf, because he has received him safe and sound.' But he was angry and refused to go in. His father came out and entreated him, but he answered his father, 'Lo, these many years I have served you, and I never disobeyed your command; yet you never gave me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends. But when this son of yours came, who has devoured your living with harlots, you killed for him the fatted calf!' And he said to him, 'Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. It was fitting to make merry and be glad, for this your brother was dead, and is alive; he was lost, and is found.'"



### *Sunday of the Prodigal Son: 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday before Lent*

The Sunday after the Sunday of the Publican and the Pharisee is the Sunday of the Prodigal Son. This parable of God's forgiveness calls us to come to ourselves" as did the prodigal son, to see ourselves as being "in a far country" far from the Father's house, and to make the journey of return to God. We are given every assurance by the Master that our heavenly Father will receive us with joy and gladness. We must only "arise and go," confessing our self-inflicted and sinful separation from that "home" where we truly belong (Luke 15:11-24).

After the Polyeleion at Matins, we first hear the Lenten hymn "By the Waters of Babylon." It will be sung for the next two Sundays before Lent begins, and it serves to reinforce the theme of exile in today's Gospel.



**Bulletin Sponsors/Prayer Requests:** Use the sign-up sheet at the candle stand for the health of, eternal memory of or a Pannikhida for a loved one or friend, for a donation of \$10. Bulletin Sponsors/Prayer Requests will be remembered during Divine Liturgy for the day/week that you signed up for.

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

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

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

**Special Announcements** for the bulletin can be submitted by E-Mail:

[OrthodoxChurchMotherOfGod@outlook.com](mailto: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**

***Presanctified Liturgies will begin on Wednesday, March 16<sup>th</sup>.***

***The Sisterhood of the Protection of the Mother of God will be sponsoring two upcoming luncheons. On Sunday, March 6th, a Meatfare Luncheon will be held. This is the last day meat is allowed before the beginning of Great Lent. On Sunday March 13th, a Cheesefare Luncheon will be held. Various dairy dishes including blini will be served. The cost of both luncheons will be \$5.00 per person.***



### **NY/NJ Diocese News**

#### **THE ANNUAL LENTEN TEEN RETREAT**

The Annual Diocesan Lenten Teen Retreat is scheduled for **April 1-3, 2016 at The Taconic Retreat Center located at 64 White Dr., Milan, NY 12572.** The Taconic Retreat Center has beautiful grounds offering dormitory style rooms, an indoor basketball court and a game cabinet which offers a variety of traditional board games or you can join in Taconic's version of carpet ball: Thunderball. Ping pong, air hockey, and Foosball are also available for use. The Taconic Retreat Center has been reserved for the Diocese of New York and New Jersey. The arrival of the participants will be on Friday evening, April 1. The retreat will conclude on Sunday, April 3, following the celebration of the Divine Liturgy. Last year we had over 20 participants attending the retreat where they enjoyed fellowship, education, and spiritual enrichment under the guidance of His Eminence Archbishop MICHAEL. We look forward to another successful retreat where we learn Faith and Science Need Not Oppose Each Other: The Testimonies of Two Orthodox Professionals in the Field of Medicine. Those in grades 7-12 who are interested in attending the retreat should contact their parish priest for information and registration forms. Clergy of the Diocese of New York and New Jersey should report the number of participants and chaperones that will attend the retreat to Priest Jason Vansuch (as soon as possible). Adult supervision will also be sought to accompany the participants.

***Save the Date!***  
**LENTEN TEEN RETREAT**  
**APRIL 1-3, 2016**



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

#### **New Skete announces 50th Anniversary events CAMBRIDGE, NY [OCA]**

The monks and nuns of New Skete Monasteries here are planning a variety of events to mark the community's 50th Anniversary in 2016.

New Skete—a monastic community of the Orthodox Church in America since 1979—was established in 1966 by a small group of Byzantine Rite Franciscan monks. In 1969, seven Poor Clare nuns from Indiana, inspired by the vision of contemporary monastic life, settled near the monks and joined New Skete. In 1983, a third community was established when eight dedicated parish members expressed their desire to live in accordance with the monastic way of life and formed the Companions of New Skete.

A Lenten retreat—"Watch and Pray: Deepening the Experience of Silence"—will open the year-long

anniversary on March 19. A series of presentations by Brothers Christopher, Stavros and Marc and Sister Rebecca will include such topics as “A Taste and Experience of Inner Silence,” “Tools for Deepening Watchfulness and Prayer,” and “Quieting the Mind: Dealing with Distractions in Prayer.” [Additional information and registration details](#) are available on New Skete’s web site.

“Seeing with New Eyes” will be the theme of two photography retreats led by noted fine arts photographer Gail S. Haile. Two sessions, during which participants will acquire a deeper appreciation for God’s creation, will be held April 17-19 [intermediate to advanced] and April 22-24 [beginners]. [Advanced registration](#) is required.

On June 4, a full-day open house and anniversary concert will be held in conjunction with the Cambridge Valley Hot Air Balloon Festival. A variety of tours and presentations will be available throughout the day. The [benefit concert](#) featuring violinist Kevin Lawrence and cellist Rhonda Rider will begin at 2:00 p.m.

New Skete’s 50th [Anniversary Pilgrimage](#) will be held on the Great Feast of the Transfiguration on August 6. Additional information will be forthcoming.

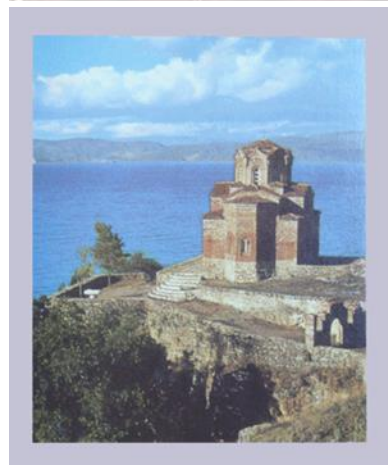
[Programs](#) in which New Skete monastics will share their expertise in the field of dog breeding and training also will be held throughout the year.

Visit [New Skete’s web site](#) for information on these and additional anniversary happenings.



### **Reach Youth Where Youth Ministry is Emerging**

Empower youth and teens in countries where youth ministry is emerging and opportunities for youth leadership exist. Orthodox Mission Teams to Alaska, Kenya, and Albania will offer programs for students and adult leaders, giving them the opportunity to develop vision for their youth groups, as well as teach the Biblical basics of youth ministry and what it means to be a leader. These teams will model servant leadership by assisting in small groups, recreation, and worship. OCMC invites you to join these opportunities in youth ministry. For more information, please visit [www.ocmc.org](http://www.ocmc.org), e-mail [teams@ocmc.org](mailto:teams@ocmc.org), or call 1-877 GO FORTH (ext. 141).



### ***Prayers by the Lake, St. Nikolai Velimirovich, XLVI:***

*I descend deep into my soul to see who is being born within her and who is departing from her.*

How dreadful is the depth of the soul of man, O Bride of Heaven, when a man dares to plunge into her! One who dares to do so plunges through the world and through Hades all the way to the milkwhite choirs of angels, who surround You like Your outer raiment.

I was astonished, when I beheld all the multitudinous offspring of my soul, who were frightened of me and flew off to the side like frightened ravens from carrion.



And my soul was lying there debauched with drunkards of Babylon like a slut, who had forgotten her betrothed.

And with the wrath of a weakling and in the manner of one caught in the act, my soul began to justify herself. Even before there was an accusation she began to justify herself by saying: "Am I not bearing you sons? Am I not sending you spirits?"

But I hid my face for shame and said: Truly, and in this are to be found both my downfall and yours, because you keep bearing me sons when I need the Son, and you keep sending me spirits when I need the Spirit.

You have not borne me sons but hirelings and thieves. You have sent me not spirits but the unclean demons of Hades.

As a virgin you were given to me, your kinsman, for protection, so that you would conceive from the Holy Spirit and bear me the Son. But you, wretched wench, have not conceived from God but from the world, and you have not borne me God but the world.

Why did you not wait for the Spirit of God in virginity, rather than receive the spirits of darkness, who have multiplied within you and have enslaved my heart?

You were raised to be a temple for God, but you have turned yourself into a wayside tavern, where thieves drop in and loll.

Why did you not give birth to the Son of Wisdom, who would have given you light and a good reputation, instead of bearing me sons of evil, who have seized my mind, and have repaid you with darkness and irrationality?

Behold you are being nourished with the same sort of fruit as you have borne. And everything that is coming out of you, is returning to you multiplied.

Oh if you knew, my soul, if you only knew the beauty of the heavenly Virgin, whose image you were supposed to be within me! If you knew how marvelous and mighty the Spirit is, who overshadowed Her!<sup>1</sup> If you only knew how exceedingly handsome and majestic the Son is, whom She bore! I assure you, my ugliness, that you would burst into tears of blood, for you have stamped the seal of your ugliness on my body as well.

And you would cast out the unclean spirits, my soul, and would chase them away into the swine.<sup>2</sup> And you would kick out your offspring, who have been feeding both you and themselves hogwash.

And you would cense your home with the most fragrant incense, and would illuminate it with altar candles. You would adorn it with flowers and stars. And the angels, who surround your Heavenly Lady like milkwhite raiment, would freely come to visit you and would bear the glad tidings of the Annunciation,<sup>3</sup> at which your womb would tremble. Your womb would tremble like the morning dew on the mountain beneath the gentle blows of the sunbeams.

And you would rejoice, my soul, among the prodigal souls of the earth. And you would give birth to the Son, who with His light would drive out the illusory shadows from my mind and who with His fire would consume the worldly desires in my heart. And He would free my entire life from the power of evil spirits, and would wrap it entirely in the mantle of the power and the glory of the Spirit of God.

I see tears instead of anger in your eyes and I am glad, my repentant soul.

I observe your silence, in which a rebellion against yourself is being born.

Repent and be restored, my soul, repent while you still have time. Array yourself in virginity quickly; more quickly, before your defiled temporality becomes a defiled eternity.

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

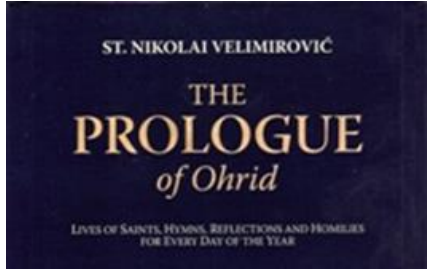
## **II. The Realities of the Spiritual World The Purpose of Life**

Every Christian should find for himself the imperative and incentive to become holy. If you live without struggle and without hope of becoming holy, then you are Christians only in name and not in essence. But

without holiness, no one shall see the Lord, that is to say they will not attain eternal blessedness. It is a trustworthy saying that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners (I Tim. 1:15). But we deceive ourselves if we think that we are saved while remaining sinners. Christ saves those sinners by giving them the means to become saints.

St. Philaret of Moscow, Sermon of September 23, 1847

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### **1. The Priestly-Martyr Proterius**

This saint was a presbyter in Alexandria at the same time when Dioscorus the heretic was patriarch of Alexandria. Dioscorus was one of the leaders of the Monophysite heresy, which taught that there was one nature in Christ [Human] and not two natures [Human and Divine]. Marcian and Pulcheria also reigned at that time as emperor and empress. This holy and devout man, Proterius, stood up against Dioscorus for which he endured many miseries. Then the Fourth Ecumenical Council [Chalcedon, 451 A.D.] was convened at which the Monophysite heresy was condemned. Dioscorus was removed from the patriarchal throne and banished into exile. Proterius, this true-believing man, was elected in his place. He governed the Church with zeal and love--a true follower of Christ. However, the followers of Dioscorus did not cease to create a disturbance in Alexandria. At the time of one such bloody disturbance, Proterius left the city with the intention of staying away temporarily. Along the way, the Prophet Isaiah appeared to him in a vision and said: "Return to the city, I am waiting to take you." Proterius returned to Alexandria and entered the church. Upon hearing about this, the enraged heretics rushed into the church, seized the patriarch and stabbed him throughout with knives. Six other Christians were also slain with Proterius. Thus, Proterius, this wonderful shepherd of Christ's flock, received the martyr's wreath for the truth of Orthodoxy in the year 457 A.D.

### **2. Saint Basil the Confessor**

Basil was a companion and co-suffer with St. Procopius of Decapolis. Basil faithfully followed his teacher Procopius, both in peaceful times and in times of persecution. He suffered many hardships from the iconoclasts. When the iconoclasts were defeated, Basil, according to God's Providence, returned together with Procopius to his monastery, where in fasting and prayer he lived a long life of asceticism. He died peacefully in the year 747 A.D.

### **3. The Priest-Martyr Nestor**

Nestor was the bishop of Magydos in Pamphylia. He was distinguished by his great meekness. During the reign of Decius, he was brought to trial and cruelly tortured for Christ. Before his death, he saw in a vision a sacrificial lamb, which he interpreted as a sign of his impending sacrifice. He was tortured by the Eparch [governor] Publius and in the end was crucified in Perga, the capital of the province, in the year 250 A.D.

### **4. Blessed Nicholas, Fool for Christ from Pskov**

Nicholas lived as a "fool for Christ" in the town of Pskov during the reign of Tsar Ivan the Terrible and died on February 28, 1576 A.D.



### **Hymn of Praise**

#### *Two Natures*

Two natures, the Lord united,  
That He does not separate them anymore:  
Human and Divine.  
He does not separate them anymore:  
God and Man--One Person.  
In both respects undiminished,  
The God-Man and Savior,  
That which is separated--the Unifier,  
Interpreter of the eternal mysteries,  
Founder of the kingdom of the saints.  
To man, God came closer,  
Time uplifted, eternity descended.  
Of the Holy Trinity, Christ the trumpet;  
Of the Two Natures, Christ the mystery.  
The true God became man,  
Remained up and descended down.  
Neither did He fall nor stumble,  
But in flesh wrapped Himself.  
That is holy, pure love,  
Love eternal, eternally the same.  
A giant, He raised, with His small finger,  
And incomprehensible to the mind, this is.

### **Reflection**

"Fools for Christ" were distinguished by rare fearlessness. Blessed Nicholas ran throughout the streets of Pskov pretending insanity, rebuking the people for their hidden sins and prophesying that which would befall them. When Ivan the Terrible entered Pskov, the entire town was in fear and terror of the terrible Tsar. As a welcome to the Tsar, bread and salt were placed in front of every home, but the people did not appear. When the mayor of the town presented the Tsar with bread and salt on a tray before the church, the Tsar pushed the tray away, and the bread and salt fell to the ground. At that time, Blessed Nicholas appeared before the Tsar in a long shirt tied with a rope, hopping around on a cane as a child, and then cried out: "Ivanuska, Ivanuska, eat bread and salt and not human blood." The soldiers rushed out to catch him but he fled and hid. The Tsar learning about this Blessed Nicholas--who and what he was--visited him in his scant living quarters. It was the first week of the Honorable Fast [The First Week of Lent]. Upon hearing that the Tsar was coming to visit him, Nicholas found a piece of raw meat, and when the Tsar entered his living quarters, he bowed and offered the meat to the Tsar. "Eat Ivanusha, eat!" Angrily, the Terrible Tsar replied: "I am a Christian and I do not eat meat during the Fast Season." Then the man of God quickly responded to him: "But you do even worse: you feed on men's flesh and blood, forgetting not only Lent but also God!" This lesson entered profoundly into the heart of Tsar Ivan, and he, ashamed, immediately departed Pskov, where he had intended to perpetrate a great massacre.

### **Contemplation**

To contemplate the Lord Jesus as the Bread of Life: *I am the Bread of Life* (St. John 6:48):

1. As the Bread by which the soul is nourished and lives;
2. As the Bread by which the mind is nourished and enlightened;



3. As the Bread by which the heart is nourished and enobled.

**Homily:**  
**About the nourishment of the soul**

*"I am the Bread of Life " (St. John 6:48).*

Thus spoke the Lord Jesus to the hungry generation of man. These words were realized throughout the centuries to the numerous followers of Christ, who received the Lord as the nourishment of their souls. A desperate young man who was close to suicide confessed to a spiritual father. The spiritual father listened to him carefully and said to him: "My son, you are to blame for your misfortune. Your soul is starved to death. Throughout your entire life, you learned only how to nourish your body, but you never thought that the soul requires nourishment; greater and more often than that which the body needs. Your soul is at the point of death from hunger. My son, partake of and drink Christ [Holy Communion]. Only this can restore your soul from death. Daily and continually partake and drink of Christ. He is the Life-creating Bread of our souls." The young man listened to the elder and returned to life.

Brethren, let us nourish our souls with Christ, so that our souls may be alive and healthy. Let us continually nourish our minds with Christ's thoughts, so that our minds might be enlightened and clear. Let us continually nourish our hearts with the love of Christ, so that our hearts might be full and joyful. Let us continually nourish our wills with the commandments of Christ and the example of Christ, so that our wills, every minute, might perform good deeds. Let Christ's thoughts be our thoughts and Christ's love our love and Christ's good will our good will. Let us continually nourish our souls with Christ the Lord; with our soul let us continually partake of Him and drink Him! There is no more nourishing Bread than He; there is no sweeter drink than He. In Holy Communion, He gives Himself completely to us, Body and Blood. But Holy Communion is a warning [reminder] that our souls must continually be nourished by Him; continually partake of Him and drink of Him just as we continually breathe.

Oh, our Good and Sweet Lord, stir up our souls that they be continually nourished by You and remain alive. You are our Bread of Life.

**To Thee be glory and praise forever. Amen.**



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

**Forgiving Others**  
***We must put aside all resentment***

The decision to forgive another person a wrong done to us begins when we decide to let go of resentment and thoughts of revenge. To forgive someone does not mean that we forget what they did to us, for this may be impossible. The memory of the hurt might always remain with us, but when we decide to forgive the person who wronged us, the grip of resentment is put aside. When we forgive someone it is even possible to find ourselves filled with compassion and empathy for the person, for the act of forgiveness opens the heart to God's grace.

When we forgive someone, we are not denying their responsibility for hurting or offending us, nor are we justifying their act. We can forgive them without approving or excusing their transgression against us, for the act of forgiving another opens our heart to the peace that brings closure to hurt and pain, and opens us up to the love and peace that comes from living a life without resentment.

If we find ourselves struggling to forgive, it is good to recall those hurtful things we've done to others, and remember when we've been forgiven. It is especially good to recall how God has forgiven us, and call upon Him to give us the grace needed to put aside our resentment, and truly forgive the other person.


Being quick to forgive, and putting aside all thoughts of revenge will open our heart to a joyful and peaceful life.

Finally, if we pray for those who’ve offended us, we open the door to all kinds of possibilities. When we ask God to help the person whose been unkind and hurtful, our own hearts receive healing, for when we’ve forgiven others, grace abounds.

“Don’t repay evil for evil. Don’t retaliate when people say unkind things about you. Instead, pay them back with a blessing. That is what God wants you to do, and he will bless you for it.” (1 Peter 3:9)

With love in Christ,  
Abbot Tryphon


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*Coffee with  
Sr. Vassa*

**Daily Reflection**  
**Idleness & Despondency**

*“O Lord and Master of my life, a spirit of idleness, despondency, love of power, and idle talking give me not.” (Lenten Prayer of St.*



Ephrem, part 1)

How very “post-post-modern” of St. Ephrem that the spirit of “idleness” (inactivity, sloth, procrastination) and its outgrowth of “despondency” (various forms of depression and feelings of unfulfillment) are the very first concerns of his famous prayer. In our time, when opportunities abound for every form of distraction and entertainment, whenever and wherever the WiFi is working, these “spirits” have become our everyday companions.

St. John Climacus says that despondency makes one “look out the window” (in his context, of the monastic cell, The Ladder XIII.13). Indeed it makes me look “elsewhere,” away from the here and now, which, in despondency, ceases to satisfy. Despondency makes one lukewarm toward one’s own vocation; toward one’s own “mission” in life. It can make a previously happily-married man wander off to seek another woman.

The good news is that the challenge of despondency, when I stand up to it in Christ, in the grace-filled tools He offers me, leads to immense spiritual growth. “Nothing brings so many crowns,” writes that same author, St. John Climacus, “as a battle with despondency.” (XIII.12)

So let me begin this morning with an active, conscious, gratitude for, and attentiveness to, the here and now. Let me take a bit of time to be alone with God, in heartfelt prayer on my knees, thanking Him and asking Him to discipline me in His simple ways, guiding me and nudging me forward amidst the pesky calls of idleness and despondency.

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***We know that prayer in and of itself cannot save us, but carrying it out before God can. For when the Lord’s eyes are upon us He sanctifies us, as the sun warms everything upon which it shines.***

***-St. Gregory Palamas***



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

**"Against Our Will" by John Chrysostom**

Paul says to let this be your work: to give thanks in your prayers for the seen and the unseen benefits and for God's goodness to the willing and the unwilling...I know a certain holy man who prayed this way: "We thank You for all the goodness You have shown us from the first day until now even when we are so unworthy. We thank You for what we know You have done and what we don't know, for gifts seen and unseen, for gifts of word and action, whether we have received them willingly or not - for all these things that have been given to us, the unworthy. We have thanks for tribulations and refreshments, for hell, for punishment, and the kingdom of heaven. We beg of You to keep our souls holy, and our consciences pure, worthy of Your lovingkindness....You who gave the Only-Begotten for us and sent Your Holy Spirit to wipe out our sins, if we have willingly or unwillingly disobeyed You, forgive us. Don't attribute our sins to us. Remember everyone who called on Your name in truth. Remember everyone who wishes us well, or the contrary, for we are all human."....He prayed this because God gives us many benefits even against our will and maybe even without our knowing it. When we pray for one thing and He does the reverse, it is plain that He is doing good even when we don't know it.

*From Hudson, CD, Sharrer, JA, and Vanker, L. Day by Day with the Early Church Fathers. Hendrickson: MA, 1999. Pg. 50.*

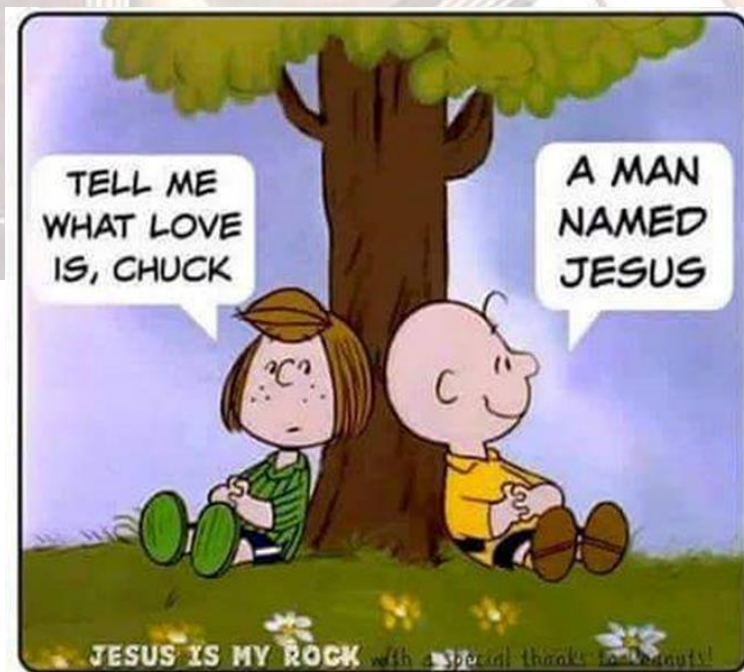
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***The Philokalia: Daily Readings***

All immortal things and immortality itself, all living things and life itself, all holy things and holiness itself, all good things and goodness itself, all blessings and blessedness itself, all beings and being itself are manifestly works of God.

- St Maximus the Confessor, 200 Chapters on the Knowledge of God

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## February/March – 2016

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<b>28</b> 9:30am Sunday School 9:40am Hours 10:00am Divine Liturgy/ Social	29	1	2	3	4 8:00-9:15pm – Living Clean NA Group Mtg.	5 6:30pm Vespers
<b>6</b> 9:30am No School 9:40am Hours 9:45am Gen'l Confession 10:00am Divine Liturgy / Social	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 6:30pm Vespers
<b>13</b> 9:30am Sunday School 9:40am Hours 10:00am Divine Liturgy / Social	14	15 7:00-8:00pm – The Grey Book Step Mtg. NA Grp	16 6:30pm Presanctified Liturgy	17	18 8:00-9:15pm – Living Clean NA Group Mtg.	19 6:30pm Vespers
<b>20</b> 9:30am Sunday School 9:40am Hours 10:00am Divine Liturgy / Social	21	22 7:00-8:00pm – The Grey Book Step Mtg. NA Grp	23 6:30pm Presanctified Liturgy	24	25 8:00-9:15pm – Living Clean NA Group Mtg.	26 6:30pm Vespers
<b>27</b> 9:30am Sunday School 9:40am Hours 10:00am Divine Liturgy / Social	28	29 7:00-8:00pm – The Grey Book Step Mtg. NA Grp	30 6:30pm Presanctified Liturgy	31		