

We would like to welcome all parish visitors and invite you to join us after the Liturgy for Coffee hour.



ORTHODOX CHURCH OF THE MOTHER OF GOD

OCA – Diocese of New York & New Jersey

The Most Reverend Michael, Archbishop of NY & the Diocese of NY/NJ

V. Rev. Dr. Matthew Searforce, Temporary Rector

Sub-Deacon Edward Dawson Sub-Deacon Vlashi

Parish Council President: Andrew Romanofsky

Parish Council Vice President: Dean Inferrera

HYMNS OF THE DAY

Resurrectional Troparion in Tone 1

When the stone had been sealed by the Jews, while the soldiers were guarding Thy most pure body, Thou didst rise on the third day, O Savior, granting life to the world. The powers of heaven therefore cried to Thee, O Giver of Life: “Glory to Thy Resurrection, O Christ! Glory to Thy Kingdom! Glory to Thy dispensation, O Thou who lovest of mankind!”

Troparion for the New Martyrs of Russia in Tone 4

Today the Church of Russia forms a chorus in joy, praising her new martyrs and confessors; hierarchs and priests, royal passion-bearers, right-believing princes and princesses, venerable men and women, and all Orthodox Christians. Having laid down their life for faith in Christ during the days of godless persecution, they preserved the truth by the shedding of blood. By their protection, O long-suffering Lord, preserve our land in Orthodoxy till the end of the age.

Kontakion from the Lenten Triodion in Tone 4

Let us flee from the pride of the Pharisee! Let us learn humility from the Publican's tears! Let us cry to our Savior: “Have mercy on us, O only merciful One!”

Prayer Requests

For Health of:

Barbara Nafranowicz, who is underwent heart valve surgery on Tuesday, January 23, offered by Archbishop Michael & the Diocese of NY/NJ.

Archpriest Maryan Chaykivsky, who had surgery on Tuesday, January 23; **Anne Cheslock**, recovering from surgery; **Katerina, Christina, and Adrianna**, praying for children; **William, Julia and Julia**, and **Daniel Metz**, Treasurer of SS. Peter and Paul Church, Buffalo NY offered by Archbishop Michael & the Diocese of NY/NJ.

In Memory of:

Theodor Prinz, offered by his daughter Lore Stefy..

Bulletin Sponsors

Lore Stefy

Archbishop Michael & the Diocese of NY/NJ

SAINTS AND FEASTS OF THE DAY

JANUARY 28, 2018

34TH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST. SUNDAY OF THE PUBLICAN AND PHARISEE
[BEGINNING OF THE LENTEN TRIODION]



Sunday of the Publican and the Pharisee: Beginning of the Lenten Triodion

The Sunday after the Sunday of Zacchaeus is devoted to the Publican and the Pharisee. At Vespers the night before, the TRIODION (the liturgical book used in the services of Great Lent) begins.

Two men went to the Temple to pray. One was a Pharisee who scrupulously observed the requirements of religion: he prayed, fasted, and contributed money to the Temple. These are very good things, and should be imitated by anyone who loves God. We who may not fulfill these requirements as well as the Pharisee did should not feel entitled to criticize him for being faithful. His sin was in looking down on the Publican and feeling justified because of his external religious observances.

The second man was a Publican, a tax-collector who was despised by the people. He, however, displayed humility, and this humility justified him before God (Luke 18:14).

The lesson to be learned is that we possess neither the Pharisee's religious piety, nor the Publican's repentance, through which we can be saved. We are called to see ourselves as we really are in the light of Christ's teaching, asking Him to be merciful to us, deliver us from sin, and to lead us on the path of salvation.



New Martyrs and Confessors of Russia

No information available at this time.



Venerable Ephraim the Syrian

Saint Ephraim the Syrian, a teacher of repentance, was born at the beginning of the fourth century in the city of Nisibis (Mesopotamia) into the family of impoverished toilers of the soil. His parents raised their son in piety, but from his childhood he was known for his quick temper and impetuous character. He often had fights, acted thoughtlessly, and even doubted God's Providence. He finally recovered his senses by the grace of God, and embarked on the path of repentance and salvation.

Once, he was unjustly accused of stealing a sheep and was thrown into prison. He heard a voice in a dream calling him to repent and correct his life. After this, he was acquitted of the charges and set free.

The young man ran off to the mountains to join the hermits. This form of Christian asceticism had been introduced by a disciple of Saint Anthony the Great, the Egyptian desert dweller Eugenius.

Saint James of Nisibis (January 13) was a noted ascetic, a preacher of Christianity and denouncer of the Arians. Saint Ephraim became one of his disciples. Under the direction of the holy hierarch, Saint Ephraim attained Christian meekness, humility, submission to God's will, and the strength to undergo various temptations without complaint.

Saint James transformed the wayward youth into a humble and contrite monk. Realizing the great worth of his disciple, he made use of his talents. He trusted him to preach sermons, to instruct children in school, and he took

Ephraim with him to the First Ecumenical Council at Nicea (in the year 325). Saint Ephraim was in obedience to Saint James for fourteen years, until the bishop's death in 338.

After the capture of Nisibis by the Persians in 363, Saint Ephraim went to a monastery near the city of Edessa. Here he saw many great ascetics, passing their lives in prayer and psalmody. Their caves were solitary shelters, and they fed themselves with a certain plant.

He became especially close to the ascetic Julian (October 18), who was of one mind with him. Saint Ephraim combined asceticism with a ceaseless study of the Word of God, taking from it both solace and wisdom for his soul. The Lord gave him a gift of teaching, and people began to come to him, wanting to hear his counsel, which produced compunction in the soul, since he began with self-accusation. Both verbally and in writing, Saint Ephraim instructed everyone in repentance, faith and piety, and he denounced the Arian heresy, which at that time was causing great turmoil. Pagans who heard the preaching of the saint were converted to Christianity.

He also wrote the first Syriac commentary on the Pentateuch (i.e. "Five Books") of Moses. He wrote many prayers and hymns, thereby enriching the Church's liturgical services. Famous prayers of Saint Ephraim are to the Most Holy Trinity, to the Son of God, and to the Most Holy Theotokos. He composed hymns for the Twelve Great Feasts of the Lord (the Nativity of Christ, the Baptism, the Resurrection), and funeral hymns. Saint Ephraim's Prayer of Repentance, "O Lord and Master of my life...", is recited during Great Lent, and it summons Christians to spiritual renewal.

From ancient times the Church has valued the works of Saint Ephraim. His works were read publicly in certain churches after the Holy Scripture, as Saint Jerome tells us. At present, the Church Typikon prescribes certain of his instructions to be read on the days of Lent. Among the prophets, Saint David is the preeminent psalmist; among the Fathers of the Church, Saint Ephraim the Syrian is the preeminent man of prayer. His spiritual experience made him a guide for monastics and a help to the pastors of Edessa. Saint Ephraim wrote in Syriac, but his works were very early translated into Greek and Armenian. Translations into Latin and Slavonic were made from the Greek text.

In many of Saint Ephraim's works we catch glimpses of the life of the Syrian ascetics, which was centered on prayer and working in various obediences for the common good of the brethren. The outlook of all the Syrian ascetics was the same. The monks believed that the goal of their efforts was communion with God and the acquisition of divine grace. For them, the present life was a time of tears, fasting and toil.

"If the Son of God is within you, then His Kingdom is also within you. Thus, the Kingdom of God is within you, a sinner. Enter into yourself, search diligently and without toil you shall find it. Outside of you is death, and the door to it is sin. Enter into yourself, dwell within your heart, for God is there."

Constant spiritual sobriety, the developing of good within man's soul gives him the possibility to take upon himself a task like blessedness, and a self-constraint like sanctity. The requital is presupposed in the earthly life of man, it is an undertaking of spiritual perfection by degrees. Whoever grows himself wings upon the earth, says Saint Ephraim, is one who soars up into the heights; whoever purifies his mind here below, there glimpses the Glory of God. In whatever measure each one loves God, he is, by God's love, satiated to fullness according to that measure. Man, cleansing himself and attaining the grace of the Holy Spirit while still here on earth, has a foretaste of the Kingdom of Heaven. To attain to life eternal, in the teachings of Saint Ephraim, does not mean to pass over from one realm of being into another, but rather to discover "the heavenly," spiritual condition of being. Eternal life is not bestowed on man through God's one-sided efforts, but rather, it constantly grows like a seed within him by his efforts, toils and struggles.

The pledge within us of "theosis" (or "deification") is the Baptism of Christ, and the main force that drives the Christian life is repentance. Saint Ephraim was a great teacher of repentance. The forgiveness of sins in the Mystery of Repentance, according to his teaching, is not an external exoneration, not a forgetting of the sins, but rather their complete undoing, their annihilation. The tears of repentance wash away and burn away the sin. Moreover, they (i.e. the tears) enliven, they transfigure sinful nature, they give the strength "to walk in the way of the the Lord's commandments," encouraging hope in God. In the fiery font of repentance, the saint wrote, "you sail yourself across, O sinner, you resurrect yourself from the dead."

Saint Ephraim, accounting himself as the least and worst of all, went to Egypt at the end of his life to see the efforts of the great ascetics. He was accepted there as a welcome guest and received great solace from conversing with them. On his return journey he visited at Caesarea in Cappadocia with Saint Basil the Great (January 1), who wanted to ordain him a priest, but he considered himself unworthy of the priesthood. At the insistence of Saint Basil, he consented only to be ordained as a deacon, in which rank he remained until his death. Later on, Saint Basil invited Saint Ephraim to accept a bishop's throne, but the saint feigned madness in order to avoid this honor, humbly regarding himself as unworthy of it.

After his return to his own Edessa wilderness, Saint Ephraim hoped to spend the rest of his life in solitude, but divine Providence again summoned him to serve his neighbor. The inhabitants of Edessa were suffering from a

devastating famine. By the influence of his word, the saint persuaded the wealthy to render aid to those in need. From the offerings of believers he built a poor-house for the poor and sick. Saint Ephraim then withdrew to a cave near Edessa, where he remained to the end of his days.



Venerable Theodosius the Abbot of Totma, Vologda

Saint Theodosius of Totma was born at Vologda about the year 1530. In his youth he was raised in a spirit of Christian piety and the fear of God. At the insistence of his parents he married, but family life did not turn him away from God. He went fervently to church and prayed at home, particularly at night. After the death of his parents and his wife, he withdrew to the Priluki monastery not far from Vologda.

At the monastery Theodosius passed through the various obediences: he carried water, chopped fire-wood, milled flour and baked bread. He went to Totma on the igumen's orders to search for a salt-works for the monastery. He sought the permission of Tsar Ivan Vasilevich and the blessing of Archbishop Nicander to found a monastery at Totma.

Theodosius was appointed head of this newly-formed Totma monastery, which in a grant of 1554 was declared free of taxation.

The saint founded the Totma Ephraimov wilderness monastery and brought brethren into it. Eventually becoming the head of two monasteries, Theodosius continued to lead an ascetic life. He wore down his body by wearing chains and a hairshirt, and beneath his monastic cowl he wore an iron cap. Fond of spiritual reading, he acquired many books for the monastery. Saint Theodosius reposed in the year 1568 and was buried in the monastery he founded, and miracles occurred at his grave.

On September 2, 1796 during the reconstruction of the Ascension church, his relics were found incorrupt, and their glorification took place on January 28, 1798, on the day of his repose.

Venerable Ephraim, Abbot and Wonderworker of Novy Torg

Saint Ephraim of Novy Torg, founder of the Saints Boris and Gleb monastery in the city of Novy Torg, was a native of Hungary. Together with his brothers, Saint Moses the Hungarian (July 26) and Saint George (in Hungarian "Sandor," pronounced "Shandor"), he quit his native land, possibly because he was Orthodox.

Having come to Russia, all three brothers entered into the service of the Rostov prince Saint Boris, son of Saint Vladimir (July 15). Saint Ephraim's brother George also perished in the year 1015 at the River Alta, with holy Prince Boris. The murderers cut off his head, and took the gold medallion which he had received from Saint Boris. Moses managed to save himself by flight, and became a monk at the Kiev Caves monastery.

Saint Ephraim, evidently in Rostov at this time, and arriving at the place of the murder, found the head of his brother and took it with him. Forsaking service at the princely court, Saint Ephraim withdrew to the River Tvertsa in order to lead a solitary monastic life.

After several other monks settled near him, he founded a monastery in honor of the holy Passion-Bearers Boris and Gleb in the year 1038. The brethren chose him to lead them. Near the monastery, not far from a merchant's road to Novgorod, a wanderer's home was built, where the poor and travelers stayed for free. Saint Ephraim died in old age. His body was buried at the monastery he founded. The head of his brother, Saint George was also placed in the grave, in accordance with his last wishes. The relics of Saint Ephraim were uncovered in the year 1572.

St. Ephraim the Bishop of Pereyaslavl, Kiev Caves, Far Caves

Saint Ephraim of the Caves, Bishop of Pereyaslavl, before his tonsure into monasticism, was treasurer and steward of household affairs at the court of the Kiev Great Prince Izyaslav (Demetrius) Yaroslavich (1054-1068). Weighed down by this noisy and bustling life and wishing to become a monk, he was accepted by Saint Anthony of the Kiev Caves and was tonsured by Saint Nikon (March 23).

The enraged prince demanded that Ephraim return, threatening to lock him up in prison and to destroy the Monastery of the Caves. Saint Anthony and the brethren left the monastery and decided to go to another place. Izyaslav, however, feared the wrath of God. He took his wife's advice and withdrew his forces from the monastery in disgrace.

Saint Ephraim wished to go on pilgrimage to the holy places abroad. With the blessing of Saint Anthony, he journeyed to Constantinople and settled there in one of the monasteries. While in Constantinople, Saint Ephraim made a copy of the Studite monastic Rule, and took it to Kiev at the request of Saint Theodosius. As soon as he received the Rule, Saint Theodosius implemented it in his monastery.

After the year 1072 Ephraim was made bishop in Pereyaslavl, with the title of Metropolitan. He adorned Pereyaslavl with many beautiful churches and public buildings, and he built stone walls around the city in the Greek manner. He built free hospices for the poor and travelers, and constructed several public bath-houses.

In the year 1091, Saint Ephraim participated in the opening and solemn transfer of the relics of Saint Theodosius. A Life of Saint Ephraim existed in former times, but it has not survived. We find an account of him both in the Life of Saint Theodosius, and in the Russian Chronicles. A tale and encomium for Saint Nicholas the Wonderworker is ascribed to Saint Ephraim.

Saint Ephraim died in the year 1098. He was buried in the Antoniev (Far) Caves of the Kiev Caves monastery. His memory is also celebrated on September 28 and on the second Sunday of Great Lent.

Venerable Palladius the Hermit, of Antioch

Saint Palladius the Desert Dweller led an ascetical life in a certain mountain cave near Syrian Antioch. Because of his struggles, he received from the Lord a gift of wonderworking. Once, a merchant was found murdered by robbers near his cave. People accused Saint Palladius of the murder, but through the prayer of the saint, the dead man rose up and named his murderers. The saint died at the end of the fourth century, leaving behind several edifying works.



St. Isaac the Syrian the Bishop of Nineveh

Saint Isaac the Syrian, Bishop of Ninevah, lived during the sixth century. He and his brother entered the monastery of Mar Matthew near Ninevah and received the monastic tonsure. His learning, virtue, and ascetic manner of life attracted the notice of the brethren, and they proposed that he head the monastery. Saint Isaac did not want this burden, preferring a life of silence, so he left the monastery to live alone in the desert.

His brother urged him more than once to return to the monastery, but he would not agree. However, when the fame of Saint Isaac's holy life had spread, he was made Bishop of Ninevah. Seeing the crude manners and disobedience of the inhabitants of the city, the saint felt that it was beyond his ability to guide them, and moreover, he yearned for solitude.

Once, two Christians came to him, asking him to settle a dispute. One man acknowledged that he owed money to the other, but asked for a short extension. The lender threatened to bring his debtor to court to force him to pay. Saint Isaac, citing the Gospel, asked him to be merciful and give the debtor more time to pay. The man said, "Leave your Gospel out of this!" Saint Isaac replied, "If you will not submit to Lord's commandments in the Gospel, then what remains for me to do here?" After only five months as bishop, Saint Isaac resigned his office and went into the mountains to live with the hermits. Later, he went to the monastery of Rabban Shabur, where he lived until his death, attaining a high degree of spiritual perfection.

From the early eighth century until the beginning of the eighteenth century, nothing was known about Saint Isaac of Syria in Europe except for his name and works. Only in 1719 was a biography of the saint published at Rome, compiled by an anonymous Arab author. In 1896, more information on Saint Isaac came to light. The learned French soteriologist Abbot Chabot published some eighth century works on Syrian history by Iezudena, bishop of Barsa, where the account of Saint Isaac the Syrian was found.

Icon of the Mother of God of Sumorin-Totma

The Sumorin Totma Icon of the Mother of God was glorified by numerous healings at the Spaso-Sumorin monastery of the city of Totma. When the inhabitants of the city turned to Tsar Ivan the Terrible for permission to build a monastery in their city, the Rostov archbishop Nicander in the year 1554 bestowed upon Saint Theodosius the grant for building. The igumen of the Priluki monastery blessed Saint Theodosius with an icon of the Mother of God for success at building the new monastery.

The icon thereafter received the name Sumorin Totma (Sumorin is the family name of Saint Theodosius, and Totma is a city). After the death of the monk, the wonderworking icon was put in a case in front of the crypt of the saint at the Ascension church of the monastery.

Saint Theodosius has appeared to many of the sick, holding this icon in his hands.



Sts. Archilius & Luarsaab

No information available at this time.

GOSPEL AND EPISTLE READINGS

Epistle Reading

Prokeimenon, Tone 1:

Let Thy mercy, O Lord, be upon us / as we have set our hope on Thee! (*Psalm 32:22*)
vs. Rejoice in the Lord, O ye righteous! Praise befits the just! (*Psalm 32:1*)

Prokeimenon, Tone 7(*New Martyrs of Russia*):

God is our refuge and strength, a help in afflictions that severely befall us. (*Psalm 45:1*)

The reading from the Second Epistle of the Holy Apostle Paul to the Timothy 3:10-15 (*Publican and Pharisee*):

Timothy, my son, you have observed my teaching, my conduct, my aim in life, my faith, my patience, my love, my steadfastness, my persecutions, my sufferings, what befell me at Antioch, at Iconion, and at Lystra, what persecutions I endured; yet from them all the Lord rescued me. Indeed all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, while evil men and impostors will go on from bad to worse, deceivers and deceived. But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings which are able to instruct you for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.

Romans 8:28-39 (*New Martyrs of Russia*)

Brethren, we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them that are the called, according to His purpose. For whom He did foreknow, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom He did predestine, them He also called; and whom He called, them He also justified; and whom He justified, them He also glorified. What then shall we say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? He Who did not spare even His own Son, delivered Him up for us all, how hath He not also, with Him freely give us all things? Who shall bring a charge against the elect of God? It is God that justifies: who is he that shall condemn? It is Christ Jesus that died, and furthermore that is risen again, Who is even at the right hand of God. Who also makes intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or the sword? As it is written: "For Thy sake we are put to death all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter." But in all these things we overcome, because of Him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Alleluia, Tone 1:

God giveth vengeance unto me, and subdues people under me. (*Psalm 17:47*)

vs. He magnifies the salvation of the King and deals mercifully with David, His anointed, and his seed forever.
(*Psalm 17:50*)

Alleluia, Tone 4:

The righteous cried, and the Lord heard them and delivered them out of all their troubles. (*Psalm 33:17*)

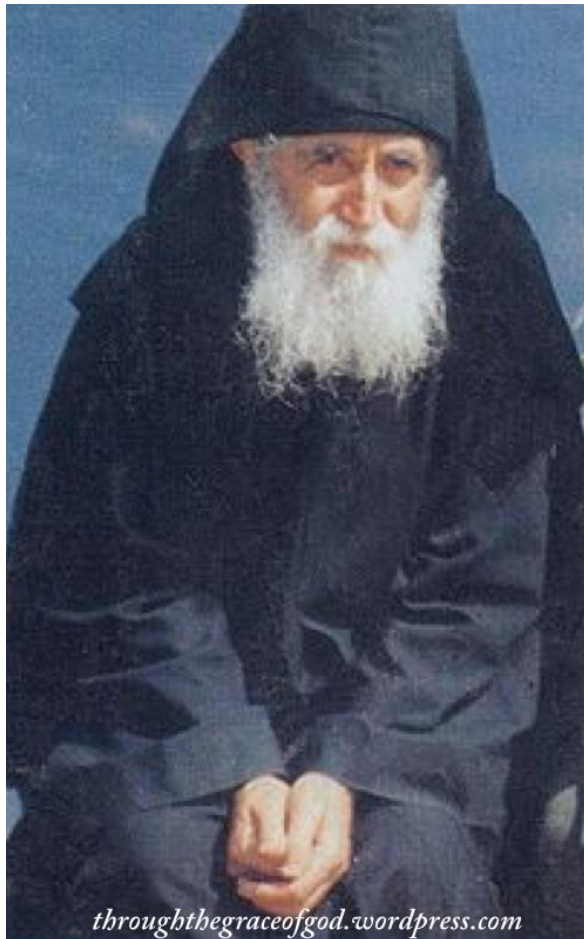
Gospel Reading

The Reading is from Luke 18:10-14 (*Publican and Pharisee*)

The Lord said this parable, "Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, 'God, I thank you that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week, I give tithes of all that I get.' But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me a sinner!' I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but he who humbles himself will be exalted."

Luke 21:8-19 (*New Martyrs of Russia*)

Then came to him his mother and his brethren, and could not come at him for the press. And it was told him by certain which said, Thy mother and thy brethren stand without, desiring to see thee. And he answered and said unto them, My mother and my brethren are these which hear the word of God, and do it.



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“Completely have trust in God, leave everything in His hands, and believe that His love will act for your own benefit. Then God will take care of everything, because there is nothing He cannot do; everything is easy for Him. The difficult thing is for man to decide to humble himself and leave everything to God’s providence and love.”

– *Saint Paisios of Mount Athos* –

PARISH NEWS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

[There will be a Parish Council meeting today Sunday January 28th, after coffee hour.](#)

[The Annual Parish Meeting of the parishioners is scheduled for Sunday February 4th, after coffee hour.](#) All members of the parish are invited to attend this important meeting.

LITURGICAL SCHEDULE

Sunday, January 28th

9:30 am: Sunday School
9:40 am: Hours
10:00 am: Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom
After Communion: Sunday School pre-K -
Grade 3

Saturday, February 3rd

6:30 pm: Vespers

Sunday, February 4th

9:30 am: No Sunday School
9:40 am: Hours
10:00 am: Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom
After Communion: Sunday School pre-K -
Grade 3

Saturday, February 10th

6:30 pm: Vespers

Sunday, February 11th

9:30 am: No Sunday School
9:40 am: Hours
10:00 am: Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom
After Communion: Sunday School pre-K -
Grade 3

Saturday, February 17th

6:30 pm: Vespers

Request & 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 will be remembered during Divine Liturgy for the day/week that you signed up for.

Memorial Candles: Candles can be purchased at the candle stand, suggested donation of \$10 for a large one.

Private Confessions: **Can be heard a half hour before any service.** See Father Matthew for other times.

General Confession: Will be at 9:45 am on the first Sunday of the month.

Receiving Holy Communion: Holy Communion is offered to those baptized Orthodox Christians who have prepared themselves for the reception of the Sacrament by prayer and fasting. Blessed Bread is available for all our visitors at the very end of the Divine Liturgy.

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

Special Announcements for the bulletin can be submitted by E-Mail: OrthodoxChurchMotherOfGod@outlook.com

The Living Clean Group of Narcotics Anonymous meets every Friday from 8-9:15 pm downstairs in the community room.

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

Orthodox Quote of the Day

The big secret of the spiritual life is to live by the strength of God and not by our own strengths, to have Christ in ourselves.

Elder Sergei of Vanves
Elder Sergei of Vanves: Life & Teachings 102



Daily Inspirations by Abbott Tryphon

The Priesthood

The priesthood should be like a funnel



If a priest is truly to be an agent for grace, he must become like a funnel through which the Lord's mercy can flow. That a priest has received the grace of ordination, if he does not attempt to live a life of holiness, if he does not become a living sacrifice for his people, if he does not give himself over to his parishioners as a loving servant, he will have failed in his priestly service.

Priesthood is not simply a profession, like that of an attorney or doctor. The priest, in his service to the Church, is sharing in Christ's priesthood. His service must be as direct and committed as is the Lord's commitment to His Church.

Those who have been placed in the care of the priest must see in him the Christ Whom he serves. They must know by his fatherly love for them that they can trust him to care for them, no matter what. If a priest is not willing to offer himself fully to his people, as their loving father, loving each with equal fervor, he will have betrayed his priestly calling.

The priest must first and foremost be a man of prayer, and his intercessory role on behalf of his people must play a central role in his day to day service. It is in his commitment to be a man of prayer that he will be able to minister to his people with the power of the Holy Spirit. No amount of education or intellectual ability can make a priest effective.

Prayer is that central element that will make him able to minister to his people with conviction, demonstrating the love of God by his life. The wisdom needed to guide his people cannot come from academic knowledge, but must flow forth as the wisdom of the ages. He must be a funnel through which the love and mercy of God can be seen and experienced by the people he is called to serve.



Daily Reflection

The "Robes" & "Seats" of Religious People



"And as Jesus taught in the temple, he said, 'How can the scribes say that the Christ is the son of David? David himself, inspired by the Holy Spirit, declared, 'The Lord said to my Lord, Sit at my right hand, till I put thy enemies under thy feet.' David himself calls him Lord; so how is he his son?' And the great throng heard him gladly. And in his teaching he said, 'Beware of the scribes, who like to go about in long robes, and to have salutations in the market places and the best seats in the synagogues and the places of honor at feasts, who devour widows' houses and for a pretense make long prayers. They will receive the greater condemnation.'" (Mk 12: 35-40)

Now, let me make no mistake: Here our Lord Jesus Christ is talking about those of us, – yes, us, – who "like to go about in long robes," like the scribes. He's talking about us, the "professional" religious people, who get "the best seats" at our church-gatherings. Not unlike the scribes, we might sometimes miss the main point of our Lord's message in Scripture (like the point the scribes missed, about Christ being the supreme "Lord," and not merely "the son," of David), and yet somewhat enjoy our own, imagined supremacy over other people, and "the places of honor" at church-feasts and such.

I'm not sure anybody else in "long robes" will read, or relate to, this reflection today. But I'll just say for myself: Let me be humbled this morning, in my "long robes," and join "the great throng" that hears the message of our Lord "gladly," as mentioned in the passage above. I need truly to "hear," and embrace in my heart, the word of the Lord, regardless of the "robes" I wear, and of the "best seat" I might get in the house of my church-community. Lord, "lead us not into temptation," by our very "seats" and "robes" in our churches, "but deliver us from the evil one." For Thine, and not anybody else's, is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen!