

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 and the Diocese of NY & NJ
V. Rev. Dr. Matthew Searfoorce, Rector

Sub-Deacon Edward Dawson
Parish Council President: Andrew Romanofsky

Sub-Deacon Vlashi
Parish Council Vice President: Holly Dawson



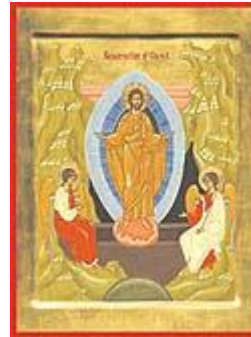
Sunday, May 1, 2016

Gospel: John 1:1-17

Holy Pascha

Epistle: Acts 1:1-8

HOLY PASCHA: The Resurrection of Our Lord



***Glory to
Jesus Christ!***

***Glory
Forever!***

***HOLY PASCHA: The
Resurrection of Our Lord***

*Cleansing your radiant heart through the Spirit, O great Prophet and Martyr,
Glorious Jeremiah, You received from on high the gift of prophecy.*

*You cried out with a great voice to the nations:
This is our God, and there is none other beside Him
who became incarnate and appeared on earth.*

Today's Commemorated Feasts and Saints

Holy Pascha — The Resurrection of Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. [Beginning of the Pentecostarion]. Prophet Jeremiah (6th c. B.C.). Ven. Paphnutius, Abbot of Boróvsk (1478). New Martyrs Euthymius (1814), Ignatius (1814), and Acacius (1816), of Mt. Athos. Hieromartyr Makáry (Macarius), Metropolitan of Kiev (1497). Martyr Bata the Persian (4th c.). Rt. Blv. Tamára, Queen of Georgia (13th c.). Ven. Nicephoros of Chios (1821). Icon of the Most-holy Theotokos, “UNEXPECTED JOY.” (1647).

Prayer Requests

For Health of:

Father Andrew Bartek on the anniversary of his ordination; offered by Trudy.
Charlotte on her birthday; offered by her grandparents Trudy and Phil.

In Memory of:

Helen Wolff on her birthday; offered by Lidia and her family.

Liturgical Schedule:

Saturday, April 30th

11:30 pm: Pascha Service
12:00 am: Resurrection Divine
Liturgy followed by Blessing
of Pascha Baskets

Sunday, May 1st

Pascha – No Church Service

Saturday, May 7th

6:30 pm: Vespers

Sunday, May 8th

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

Saturday, May 14th

6:30 pm: Vespers

Sunday, May 15th

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

Saturday, May 21st

6:30 pm: Vespers

Sunday, May 22th

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

Bulletin Sponsors:

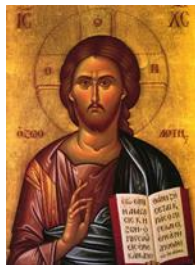
***Trudy & Phil Ellmore; The
Family of Helen Wolff***

Readings:



Epistle: Acts 1:1-8

In The First Book, O Theophilus, I have dealt with all that Jesus began to do and teach, until the day when he was taken up, after he had given commandment through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom he had chosen. To them he presented himself alive after his passion by many proofs, appearing to them during forty days, and speaking of the kingdom of God. And while staying with them he charged them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which, he said, "you heard from me, for John baptized with water, but before many days you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit." So when they had come together, they asked him, "Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom of Israel?" He said to them, "it is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has fixed by his own authority. But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth."



Gospel: John 1:1-17

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God; all things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came for testimony, to bear witness to the light, that all might believe through him. He was not the light, but came to bear witness to the light. The true light that enlightens every man was coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world knew him not. He came to his own home, and his own people received him not. But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God; who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God. And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth; we have beheld his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father. (John bore witness to him, and cried, "This was he of whom I said, 'He who comes after me ranks before me, for he was before me.'") And from his fullness have we all received, grace upon grace. For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.



HOLY PASCHA: The Resurrection of Our Lord

Pascha (Easter)

Enjoy ye all the feast of faith; receive ye all the riches of loving-kindness.
(Sermon of St John Chrysostom, read at Paschal Matins)

The resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead is the center of the Christian faith. St Paul says that if Christ is not raised from the dead, then our preaching and faith are in vain (I Cor. 15:14). Indeed, without the resurrection there would be no Christian preaching or faith. The disciples of Christ would have remained the broken and hopeless band which the Gospel of John describes as being in hiding behind locked doors for fear of the Jews. They went nowhere and preached nothing until they met the risen Christ, the doors being shut (John 20: 19). Then they touched the wounds of the nails and the spear; they ate and drank with Him. The resurrection became the basis of everything they said and did (Acts 2-4): “. . . for a spirit has not flesh and bones as you see that I have” (Luke 24:39).

The resurrection reveals Jesus of Nazareth as not only the expected Messiah of Israel, but as the King and Lord of a new Jerusalem: a new heaven and a new earth.

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth. . . the holy city, new Jerusalem. And I heard a great voice from the throne saying “Behold, the dwelling place of God is with men. He will dwell with them, and they shall be his people. . . He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain any more, for the former things have passed away (Rev. 21:1-4).

In His death and resurrection, Christ defeats the last enemy, death, and thereby fulfills the mandate of His Father to subject all things under His feet (I Cor. 15:24-26).

Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing (Rev. 5: 12)

The Feast of Feasts

The Christian faith is celebrated in the liturgy of the Church. True celebration is always a living participation. It is not a mere attendance at services. It is communion in the power of the event being celebrated. It is God’s free gift of joy given to spiritual men as a reward for their self-denial. It is the fulfillment of spiritual and physical effort and preparation. The resurrection of Christ, being the center of the Christian faith, is the basis of the Church’s liturgical life and the true model for all celebration. This is the chosen and holy day, first of sabbaths, king and lord of days, the feast of feasts, holy day of holy days. On this day we bless Christ forevermore (Irmos 8, Paschal Canon).

Preparation

Twelve weeks of preparation precede the “feast of feasts.” A long journey which includes five prelenten Sundays, six weeks of Great Lent and finally Holy Week is made. The journey moves from the self-willed exile of the prodigal son to the grace-filled entrance into the new Jerusalem, coming down as a bride beautifully adorned for her husband (Rev. 21:2) Repentance, forgiveness, reconciliation, prayer, fasting, almsgiving, and study are the means by which this long journey is made.

Focusing on the veneration of the Cross at its midpoint, the lenten voyage itself reveals that the joy of the resurrection is achieved only through the Cross. “Through the cross joy has come into all the world,” we sing in one paschal hymn. And in the paschal troparion, we repeat again and again that Christ has trampled down death—by death! St Paul writes that the name of Jesus is exalted above every name because He first emptied Himself, taking on the lowly form of a servant and being obedient even to death on the Cross (Phil. 2:5-11). The road to the celebration of the resurrection is the self-emptying crucifixion of Lent. Pascha is the passover from death to life.

Yesterday I was buried with Thee, O Christ. Today I arise with Thee in Thy resurrection. Yesterday I was crucified with Thee: Glorify me with Thee, O Savior, in Thy kingdom (Ode 3, Paschal Canon).

The Procession

The divine services of the night of Pascha commence near midnight of Holy Saturday. At the Ninth Ode of the Canon of Nocturn, the priest, already vested in his brightest robes, removes the Holy Shroud from the tomb and carries it to the altar table, where it remains until the leave-taking of Pascha. The faithful stand in darkness. Then, one by one, they light their candles from the candle held by the priest and form a great procession out of the church. Choir, servers, priest and people, led by the bearers of the cross, banners, icons and Gospel book, circle the church. The bells are rung incessantly and the angelic hymn of the resurrection is chanted.

The procession comes to a stop before the principal doors of the church. Before the closed doors the priest and the people sing the troparion of Pascha, “Christ is risen from the dead...”, many times. Even before entering the church the priest and people exchange the paschal greeting: “Christ is risen! Indeed He is risen!” This segment of the paschal services is extremely important. It preserves in the experience of the Church the primitive accounts of the resurrection of Christ as recorded in the Gospels. The angel rolled away the stone from the tomb not to let a biologically revived but physically entrapped Christ walk out, but to reveal that “He is not here; for He has risen, as He said” (Matt. 28:6).

In the paschal canon we sing: Thou didst arise, O Christ, and yet the tomb remained sealed, as at Thy birth the Virgin’s womb remained unharmed; and Thou has opened for us the gates of paradise (Ode 6).

Finally, the procession of light and song in the darkness of night, and the thunderous proclamation that, indeed, Christ is risen, fulfill the words of the Evangelist John: “The light shines in darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it” (John 1:5).

The doors are opened and the faithful re-enter. The church is bathed in light and adorned with flowers. It is the heavenly bride and the symbol of the empty tomb: Bearing life and more fruitful than paradise brighter than any royal chamber, Thy tomb, O Christ, is the fountain of our resurrection (Paschal Hours).

Matins

Matins commences immediately. The risen Christ is glorified in the singing of the beautiful canon of St John of Damascus. The paschal greeting is repeatedly exchanged. Near the end of Matins the paschal verses are sung. They relate the entire narrative of the Lord’s resurrection. They conclude with the words calling us to actualize among each other the forgiveness freely given to all by God:

This is the day of resurrection. Let us be illumined by the feast. Let us embrace each other. Let us call “brothers” even those who hate us, And forgive all by the resurrection. . .

The sermon of St John Chrysostom is then read by the celebrant. The sermon was originally composed as a baptismal instruction. It is retained by the Church in the paschal services because everything about the night of Pascha recalls the Sacrament of Baptism: the language and general terminology of the liturgical texts, the specific hymns, the vestment color, the use of candles and the great procession itself. Now the sermon invites us to a great reaffirmation of our baptism: to union with Christ in the receiving of Holy Communion.

If any man is devout and loves God, let him enjoy this fair and radiant triumphal feast. . . the table is fully laden; feast you all sumptuously. . . the calf is fatted, let no one go hungry away. . .

The Divine Liturgy

The sermon announces the imminent beginning of the Divine Liturgy. The altar table is fully laden with the divine food: the Body and Blood of the risen and glorified Christ. No one is to go away hungry. The service books are very specific in saying that only he who partakes of the Body and Blood of Christ

eats the true Pascha. The Divine Liturgy, therefore, normally follows immediately after paschal Matins. Foods from which the faithful have been asked to abstain during the Lenten journey are blessed and eaten only after the Divine Liturgy.

The Day Without Evening

Pascha is the inauguration of a new age. It reveals the mystery of the eighth day. It is our taste, in this age, of the new and unending day of the Kingdom of God. Something of this new and unending day is conveyed to us in the length of the paschal services, in the repetition of the paschal order for all the services of Bright Week, and in the special paschal features retained in the services for the forty days until Ascension. Forty days are, as it were, treated as one day. Together they comprise the symbol of the new time in which the Church lives and toward which she ever draws the faithful, from one degree of glory to another.

O Christ, great and most holy Pascha. O Wisdom, Word and Power of God, grant that we may more perfectly partake of Thee in the never-ending day of Thy kingdom (Ninth Ode, Paschal Canon).

The V. Rev. Paul Lazor
New York, 1977



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

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

The Grey Book Study 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 are no updates or new news for this week.



NY/NJ Diocese News

Archpastoral Letter for Great and Holy Pascha 2016

Great and Holy Pascha

Sunday, May 1, 2016

Dearly Beloved Members of our Diocesan Family:

Christ is Risen! – Indeed He is Risen!

“This is the day which the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it!”

(Psalm 117:24 LXX)

Christ is Risen! He has burst open the gates of Hades, and freed the dead from captivity! He has renewed the earth through the members of His Church, now born anew in Baptism, and He has made creation blossom afresh with men and women brought back to life! He has unlocked the doors of Heaven, which now stand wide open to receive those who rise up from the earth!

Because of Christ’s Resurrection, the thief ascends to Paradise, the bodies of the Saints enter the Holy City, and the dead are restored to the company of the living! There is an upward movement in all of creation – each element being raised to something higher! We see Hades releasing its victims to the upper regions, the earth sending its buried dead to Heaven, and Heaven presenting its new arrivals to the Lord! In one and the same movement, Our Savior’s Passion raises men from the depths, lifts them up from the earth, and sets them in the heights!

Christ is Risen! His rising brings life to the dead, forgiveness to sinners, and glory to the Saints! It is no wonder David the Psalmist summons all creation to join in celebrating the Paschal Feast: *“This is the day which the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it.”*

And so, my brothers and sisters, each of us ought truly to rejoice on this Holiest of Days! Let no one, conscious of his sinfulness, withdraw from this glorious celebration. Nor let anyone be kept from the Holy Liturgy because of the burden of his guilt. Sinners we may indeed be, but we must not despair of pardon on this day which is so highly privileged. If a thief could receive the grace of Paradise, how could a repentant Christian be refused forgiveness?

Christ is Risen! The Conqueror has redeemed us! He handed Himself over to wicked men so that He could transform the wicked into Saints truly dear to Him! By focusing our attention upon the glory of Our Redeemer, there is sufficient hope for our resurrection. Through faith we know that we are already risen from the dead. Saint Paul tells us, *“Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him”* (Romans 6:8).

Even as regards our departed loved ones, the Apostle does not want us to grieve about those who have fallen asleep. Let the hope of the Resurrection encourage us, because we shall see again those whom we have lost here below. Of course, we must continue to firmly believe in the Risen Christ; we must continue to obey His commandments. But we know that His power is so great that it is easier for Him to raise the dead to life than it is for us to arouse those who are sleeping.

As we ponder these things, some feelings may cause us to weep for those we love; some hidden feelings may discourage our minds from trust and hope. Such is the sad human condition – without Christ, all of life is emptiness! But with Him, we share in His victory: The triumph of His light over darkness! The triumph of His goodness over evil! The triumph of His love over hate! The triumph of His healing over suffering! The triumph of His salvation over sin! The triumph of His life over death!

True, for a time death separates those who are joined to each other in marriage. Yes, it harshly and cruelly divides those whom friendship unites. But, Christ is Risen! Death’s power is broken! Its heinous yoke has been destroyed by the One who threatened it with the cry of the Prophet Hosea: *“O Death, I shall be your death”* (Hosea 13:14). And with the words of the Apostle Paul, we too deride it: *“O Death, where is your victory? O Death, where is your sting?”* (I Corinthians 15:55).

Christ is Risen! Indeed He is Risen! On this joyous day, my beloved, let us truly celebrate! But let us also remember: We do not really belong to ourselves. We belong to the One Who has redeemed us! Our will should always depend upon His! For this reason we say in the Lord’s Prayer: *“Thy will be done!”* Yes, we belong to the Risen Savior ... the One Who has triumphed on Holy Pascha! We belong to the Resurrected Christ ... the One Who promises us: *“I am the Resurrection and the Life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, yet shall he live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die”* (John 11:25- 26). We belong to the Lord of Glory ... the God Who loves us more than we love ourselves!

Christ is Risen! Indeed He is Risen! May the Resurrected Lord bless you and your loved ones on this great Feast of Feasts and always – with all the good things that come from His hands!

With my humble prayers, my Archpastoral blessing and my sincere love,
+ **MICHAEL**
Archbishop of New York and the
Diocese of New York and New Jersey



Orthodox Church in America (OCA) News

Holy Pascha: The Blast of a Trumpet

[by Father Lawrence Farley]

From the prophecies of Isaiah: “It will come about also in that day that a great trumpet will be blown, and those who were perishing in the land of Assyria and who were scattered in the land of Egypt will come and worship the Lord in the holy mountain at Jerusalem” (Isaiah 27:13). The prophet here surveys the world around him, and sees how the people of God were languishing in exile, scattered to the four winds and perishing helplessly in the lands of the mighty superpowers of the day, Assyria and Egypt. Israel was tiny, powerless, unable to lift a finger to help; the superpowers sat invincible on their haughty thrones, intent upon keeping their prey within their grip. But help would arrive, and it would come about that in the day God arose to shake the towers and counsels of the great, He would save His people. A great trumpet would be blown, the signal of deliverance and freedom, a summons for the exiles to arise and be free and come home.

Why a trumpet? Why not (for example) a signal fire, or the waving of a standard? Why a trumpet blast, and what did the blast of a trumpet mean to Israel? For one thing, it meant the Year of Jubilee. In the Law, every seventh year was a year of release, a year when all the slaves were to be set free (Exodus 21:1), and after every forty-nine years — i.e. seven times seven years — freedom would come to all in the land: “You shall consecrate the fiftieth year and proclaim a release through the land to all its inhabitants. It shall be a jubilee for you, and each of you shall return to his own property, and each of you shall return to his family” (Leviticus 25:10). No matter what had happened by way of poverty or misfortune, whatever the disaster which had forced the poor man to sell his land to pay his debts, once every lifetime, once every fifty years, everyone had a second chance to start over. Everyone could go free, everyone could go home. The downtrodden waited to hear the blast of that jubilee trumpet — and

indeed the very word “jubilee” comes from the Hebrew word for “ram’s horn” or “trumpet.” When the Septuagint writers encountered the Hebrew word, they rendered it “signal of release.”

This prophecy of restoration, like all such prophecies, finds its fulfillment in Christ. He is our Jubilee, the Jubilee of all the world, and His Resurrection is the trumpet which announces it. With the rolling away of the stone from the door of the tomb, a trumpet began sounding which has never ceased to sound. It calls all the exiles home, announcing the forgiveness of every debt, liberation from every bond of sin and death. And not just the Jewish exiles, for Christ died not only for the Jewish nation, “but He that might also gather together into one the children of God who are scattered abroad,” Gentiles as well as Jews (John 11:52). As many in the world whom God taught and who heard the voice of the Shepherd, just as many God would gather into one, “and they shall become one flock with one Shepherd” (John 10:16). It did not matter whether or not one was a great sinner, or bound by shackles of addiction and despair. It did not matter whether or not one lived in the land of Assyria or the land of Egypt — Christ came to forgive and liberate all, and gather the exile safe and sound in His holy flock.

What then is our responsibility? Pascha calls us to live like men and women who have heard the blast of a trumpet, who have arisen like those alive from the dead, living in joy. Nietzsche famously said that he would believe in the Redeemer when the Christians looked a little more redeemed. Fair enough: let us live in such a way that all may know that we have been redeemed — living each day in freedom and joy. Formerly we lived like everyone else, helpless and trembling in the shadow of death, debtors to sin in the lands of Assyria and Egypt. But no longer. Now we are going home, our faces radiant with Pascha, the faces of those who have heard the blast of the Jubilee trumpet. Let that trumpet sound in the ears of the weary world, loud enough to wake the dead: “Christ is risen!”



Laying a Foundation: 2016 OCMC Mission Team to Mexico

by Hannah Valentine (4/12/2016)

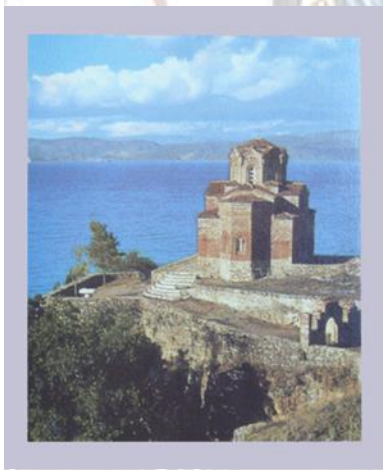
OCMC recently sent its fourth mission team of 2016 to San Esteban, Mexico, to support the faithful by offering simple catechism and the life-giving services of the Church. OCA Archpriest Antonio Perdomo of Pharr, TX, led the team of seven: Fr. David Moga (WI), Sbdn. Basil Almy (KS), Art Dossey (CA), Susie Almy (KS), Hannah Valentine (IA), and Fernando Arango (FL). This Pan-Orthodox group soon melded together in the warmth of shared vision and experience. I know without my team I would not have mastered the art of “shower in a bucket” or sleeping on wooden planks! It was made easy by the bright eyes and smiles of the children and their parents; never have I shaken so many hands nor met such polite, friendly people.

San Esteban lies tucked away in the green mountains of the state of Hidalgo, not exactly the first place one might look for the Orthodox Faith. Mexico is known for its history of Roman Catholicism, brought to its shores by the Spanish in the 1500’s. Indeed, the influence Catholicism has had in the Mexican culture reveals itself through streetside shrines for the Virgin and small statues of Christ in public buses. When meeting with Archbishop Alejo of the OCA in Mexico City, I was amazed to hear that people in San Esteban had been under the OCA for over forty years. And yet, as His Grace continued the story, the need for our team’s work grew clear. Though these people would answer the question, “What kind of Christian are you?” with the response, “Orthodox,” they had little knowledge of the Church, her history, traditions, and creed. Remote as the town is, any priest wishing to visit the faithful faces a considerable challenge. Until recent years, a bridgeless river forced visiting priests to brave small boats in order to cross. And unless the priest had his own car, he would travel by foot or atop the swaying gait of a burro. The priest

serving them, Fr. Serafim, now finds himself in this position. Not owning a car, he has traveled as he can to visit the faithful in San Esteban and nearby villages with Orthodox Christian communities. Well-loved by the people, Fr. Serafim awaits the completion of a permanent home for himself within the village. Our team's goal was simple enough: to lay a foundation for the faithful so that when Fr. Serafim's residence is finished, he has something upon which to build.

We reached San Esteban on Monday night of the trip, and remained through Friday morning. Our team offered activities for the children each morning related to the Cross, the Resurrection, and the Ascension. Working with varying abilities to speak the Spanish language, each member of our team embraced the children with the love of Christ in words as well as in action. The church's walls rang with children's voices as they colored their images of the Cross, and the courtyard just outside the church echoed with laughter as they learned how to throw frisbees. In the evenings, Fr. Antonio, Fr. David, and Fr. Serafim led the Service of Thanksgiving or Vespers. The pews filled with the smallest of babes and the grayest of grandmothers. I could see their love for God reflected in their eyes; at no moment was this more evident than when all lined up to receive the Eucharist on Thursday morning.

Only so much can be done in three days. And yet, God is not limited by time as we are, so the effects of our humble work go beyond what we saw. Through the generous support of friends and family, each team member had the opportunity to spend a week of this Great Lent in a special kind of self-denial and servitude. Now I ask for your continued prayers for our brothers and sisters in Christ who live in Mexico, that together one day we might all stand in the Light of our resurrected Lord in Paradise.



Prayers by the Lake, St. Nikolai Velimirovich, LV:

"Who are You?" the children of the world ask the Son, O my virgin soul.

For they see Him walking among them as a King among slaves. And they listen to His powerful words, but fail to understand. And they behold His powerful deeds, and are filled with fear. And they feel power going out of Him, and are confounded.

But your Son--the fairest among the sons of men, with the clear eyes of an ox, with the peacefulness of a lamb, with the strength of a lion, with the soaring loftiness of an eagle, and with the face of an angel--answers them: "I am the Truth. I have come from the Truth, I bear you a gift from the Truth, and I am returning to the Truth.

"If truth were in you, you would have recognized Me and would

not have asked: 'Who are you?'

"Truly, you do not even know how to ask who you are; how then will you understand if I tell you -- who I am?

"Lo, you are nothing by yourselves alone. You are like a dream separated from the dreamer. You are neither two seconds in time nor two paces in space. As when smoke drifts over the lake and its shadow dances on the water, so is your life also an empty and non-existent dancing of shadows.

"Only you still have not forgotten how to utter the word 'truth,' but this is all that remains to you of the Truth. You call the glitter of matter truth, as though you were a lifelong captive in a dungeon who had only heard of the sun, and called an insect--a firefly--the sun.

"When someone comes to know the Truth, Truth takes up its abode in him. He becomes one with the Truth and is no longer half a man but a whole man. Truth heals him and makes him whole, while illusion chops a man up into pieces and grinds him into powder.

"Just as it is no longer possible for the scattered ashes of a tree to recognize a verdant tree, so is it impossible for you to recognize Me.

"Truly I am the Truth, the same yesterday, today, and tomorrow. The Spirit of Truth, who is with Me, He it is who also speaks through Me and He it is who lives within Me. Without Him I would be nothing, just as you yourselves are. But because of Him living within Me, I am the One Who Is.

"I have come down from on high, like frightful rain, to fill a parched river bed, which you always used to call a river.

"Others brought laws, but I bring the Truth. Others cleared the river bed of its dried mud and prepared it for water, but they could not supply the water. I am supplying the water; I am filling the river bed; and I am justifying the river's name.

"I have not come to your drought-stricken land to teach you how to dig for ground water; rather I--the Living Water--have come so that thirsty souls may drink Me.

"Neither have I come to teach you how to make bread, but rather to be bread for all souls that hunger.

"Neither have I come down into your darkness to teach you how light is created, but rather to illumine you. Indeed, even the sun--a light far dimmer than Myself--does not teach how light is emitted, but instead illumines.

"Neither have I descended into this maniacal quivering of shadows to teach you what reality is, but rather to be Reality, in regions of emptiness and nothingness.

"Truly, I have not come to you as a teacher of wisdom, but as Wisdom itself.

"Whoever does not accept Me, does not eat Me, does not drink Me, does not breathe Me, and thereby does not become one with Me, remains outside Me --which means he remains outside of Life and Truth."

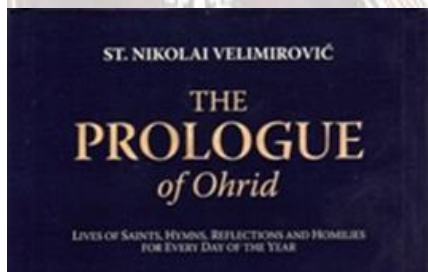
Sayings of the Ascetics of the Orthodox Church, LIV:

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



1. The Holy Prophet Jeremiah

Jeremiah was born about 650 years before Christ in the village of Anathoth near Jerusalem. He began to prophesy at the age of fifteen, during the reign of King Josiah. He preached repentance to the king and noblemen, false prophets and priests. During the reign of King Josiah, Jeremiah barely escaped death at the murderous hands of the enraged nobles. Concerning King Jehoiakim, he prophesied that the king's burial would be like the burial of an ass, that is, his dead body would be cast outside Jerusalem and dragged along the ground and without benefit of burial [He shall be buried with the burial of an ass, drawn and cast forth beyond the gates of Jerusalem (Jeremiah 22:18)]. Because of this, Jeremiah was cast into a prison. Not being able to write in prison, he sent for Baruch [the son of Neriah], who stood near a small window of the prison while Jeremiah dictated to him. When this prophecy was read to King Jehoiakim, the enraged king seized the paper and threw it into the fire. Divine providence saved Jeremiah from prison, and the words of the prophet concerning Jehoiakim were fulfilled.

Concerning King Jeconiah [son of Jehoiakim, King of Judah], Jeremiah prophesied that he and his entire family would be carried off to Babylon and that he would die there. All of this came about shortly. Under King Zedekiah, Jeremiah placed a yoke around his own neck and walked through Jerusalem, prophesying the fall of Jerusalem and bondage under the yoke of the Babylonians [Thus said the Lord to me; Make thee bonds and yokes and put them upon thy neck (Jeremiah 27:2); I spoke also to Zedekiah, king of Judah, according to all these words saying, bring your necks under the yoke of the king of Babylon, and serve him and his people, and live (Jeremiah 27:12)]. Jeremiah wrote to the Hebrew captives in Babylon, telling them not to hope for a speedy return to Jerusalem, for they would remain in Babylon for seventy years, which came to pass [This whole land shall be a ruin and a desert. Seventy years these nations shall be enslaved to the king of Babylon (Jeremiah 25:11)]. Near Jerusalem in the Valley of Tophet, where the Jews sacrificed children to the idols, Jeremiah took a potter's clay vessel in his hands and shattered it before the people, prophesying the imminent routing of the Kingdom of Judah. The Babylonians shortly captured Jerusalem, slew King Zedekiah, plundered and destroyed the city, and beheaded a great number of Jews in the Valley of Tophet on the same spot where children had been sacrificed to idols and where the Prophet Jeremiah had smashed the potter's vessel. Jeremiah, with the Levites, removed the Ark of the Covenant from the Temple to Mount Nebo, where Moses had died. There he hid the Ark in a cave. However, he hid the fire from the Temple in a deep well. Jeremiah was forced by some Jews to accompany them to Egypt, where he lived for four years and was then stoned to death by his countrymen. To the Egyptians, Jeremiah prophesied the destruction of their idols and the arrival of the Virgin and Christ-child in Egypt. There is a tradition that states that Alexander the Great visited the tomb of the Prophet Jeremiah.) By Alexander's order, the body of Jeremiah was translated and buried in Alexandria.

2. The Venerable Martyr Acacius, The Sandal-Maker

Acacius was from the village of Neochorion near Thessalonica. Mistreated greatly by his master craftsman in Serres, Acacius converted to Islam. Later [when he returned to the Faith] as a penitent and monk, he lived in the Monastery of Hilendar [Mt. Athos]. His poor and Christ-loving mother counseled him: "As you willingly denied the Lord, so now you must willingly and bravely accept martyrdom for Sweet Jesus." The son followed the advice of his mother. With the blessing of the fathers of the Holy Mountain, Acacius traveled to Constantinople, where the Turks beheaded him on May 1, 1816 A.D. His head is preserved in a reliquary in the Russian Monastery, St. Panteleimon on Mt. Athos.

3. The Venerable Paphnutius of Borovsk

Paphnutius was born the son of a Tartar nobleman who later embraced the Christian Faith. At age twenty, Paphnutius was tonsured a monk and continued to live in a monastery until his ninety-fourth year, when he reposed in the Lord. Paphnutius was a virgin and an ascetic. Because of this, he became a miracle-worker and discernor (clairvoyant). He died in the year 1478 A.D.

Hymn of Praise *The Prophet Jeremiah*

Jeremiah, chaste one and prophet,
To men, the will of God he reveals.
When in sin, men decay
And the Law of God, they trample.
The prophet cries out, weeps and threatens,
Like a living flame, his words are,
Illumining the righteous, burning sinners;
As the tears of a mother, his tears are,

Over her dying offspring.
The prophet foresees it: punishment is coming,
A punishment one-hundred fold deserved.
The mercy of God to justice turns.
The prophet cries out, weeps and threatens,
The sinful people, calling to repentance.
To what the leaders say, the people listen,
And the leaders at the prophet laugh,
And his words, as a lie they proclaim!
But himself to be wearied, the prophet does not allow;
With sufferings, his words he seals.
Nefarious men slew the prophet
And forever made him renowned.
All the words of the prophet were fulfilled--
The kingdom fell, the prophet was glorified.

Reflection

The Venerable Paphnutius of Borovsk said to his disciples that a man's soul and his hidden works can be known by the look in his eyes. To his disciples this seemed unbelievable until this man of God confirmed this in reality on more than one occasion. Discerning the fate of others, Paphnutius also discerned his own fate. A week before, while still in good health, he prophesied that he would depart this world on the following Thursday. When Thursday dawned, he cried out rejoicingly: "Behold, the day of the Lord, rejoice O you people; behold, the awaited day has come!" Behold, this is how a man meets death; a man who, during his whole life, contemplated about separation from this world and the encounter with God.

Contemplation

To contemplate the Ascension of the Lord Jesus:

1. How two angels appeared to the disciples while they were still gazing after the ascended Lord;
2. How the angels proclaimed that the Lord would come again in the same manner as the disciples saw Him ascending into heaven.

Homily:

About the power of the Lord's word

"Is not My word like the fire, says the Lord, like a hammer shattering rocks " (Jeremiah 23:29).

Yes, O Lord, Your word is indeed like fire; like fire that warms the righteous and burns the unrighteous. And, indeed, Your word is like a hammer; a hammer that softens the stony hardness of the heart of a penitent and pulverizes the heart of an unrepentant sinner into dust.

Did not our heart burn within us, while He talked with us? (St. Luke 24:32), the apostles asked after speaking with the resurrected Lord. When the heart of a man is set aright, it burns from the word of the Lord; it is melted by kindness and expands with love. But, when the heart in man is not set right, but hardened by sin, then the heart bakes from the word of the Lord and becomes even harder. *And pharaoh's heart was hardened* (Exodus 8:19).

In vain do sinners fortify themselves in the fortresses of stone, in their fortresses of iron, in their fortresses of silver and gold, and reject the armor of God's justice. The word of the Lord is as a powerful and irresistible hammer, when He pronounces judgment upon these fortresses of stone in which sinners fortify themselves.

In vain does the unbeliever fortify his house with impregnable stones and in vain does the statesman fortify the state, hardened with the wisdom of the world and not hoping in the Living God. The word of the Lord comes down like a hammer upon all that has been built apart from God or against God--like a powerful and irresistible hammer.

O brethren, let us not trust in our creations of stone, of marble, of gold, of silver, or of the godless stones of our individual thoughts. All of these are weaker before the power of God than dust before the power of the wind.

O Lord Almighty, help us to receive Your word and, that on Your word we may build our lives both in this world and in the next.

To Thee be glory and praise forever. Amen.



The Morning Offering – Daily Inspiration with Abbott Tryphon

Great and Holy Saturday

The Orthodox Observance of Great And Holy Saturday

On Great and Holy Saturday the Church observes the day on which Christ reposed in the tomb. Foreshadowing this day as the blessed the seventh day, by Moses, the Church sees it the Blessed Sabbath. In other words, this is the day of rest on which the only-begotten Son of God rested from all His works (Vespertine Liturgy of Holy Saturday).

By calling this day the Blessed Sabbath the Church links Holy Saturday with the creative act of God. In the account of creation in the Book of Genesis, God made man in His own image and likeness, and to be truly himself, man was to live in everlasting communion with the dynamic power of that image: God. When humankind fell from God, that image was broken.

By His Holy Resurrection, the Logos (Word), the Son of God through whom all things were created, has come to restore us to communion with God. He has thereby completed creation, and all things are as the Father intended. Having consummated this great act, He rests from all His works, and this day is forever known as the Blessed Sabbath.

With love in Christ,
Abbot Tryphon



Daily Reflection But Take Courage

"The hour is coming, indeed it has come, when you will be scattered, each one to his home, and you will leave me alone. Yet I

am not alone because the Father is with me. I have said this to you, so that in me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation (θλῖψιν ἔχετε). But take courage; I have conquered the world!" (Jn 16: 32-33)

How very gentle, forgiving, and humble are these words of our Lord. He is about to be abandoned by us, by His very own, and delivered into the hands of His enemies. And yet He consoles us, so that, even



in our weakness and failure in His final hours, in Him we *"may have peace."* He is about to face Judas's kiss, mockery, torture, and crucifixion, and yet He says to us: *"But take courage; I have conquered the world."*

So as Christ heads toward the Cross, He reminds me that in the world I have *"tribulation."* And a large part of this is my own falling short of His Self-giving, crucified love, when I am *"scattered"* and *"leave"* Him, time and again. But Jesus Christ conquers; He conquers all this, also in me. *"I have said this to you,"* He reminds me today, *"so that in me you may have peace."* Glory be to Him.

The Philokalia: Daily Readings

Even the passions become good if we wisely and diligently detach them from what is bodily and direct them towards the acquisition of what is heavenly. This happens, for example, when we turn desire into a noetic yearning for heavenly blessings; or when we turn pleasure into the gentle delight which the volitive energy of the intellect finds in divine gifts.

+ *St Maximus the Confessor, 500 Various Texts*

The holy Gospel teaches men to reject life according to the flesh and to embrace life according to the Spirit. I am speaking of those who are always dying to what is human - I mean human life in the flesh according to this present age - and living for God in the Spirit alone, after the example of St Paul and followers. They do not in any way live their own life but have Christ living in them in the soul alone (Gal 2:20).

+ *St Maximus the Confessor, 500 Various Texts*

Daily Readings with Early Church Fathers and Mothers

"One Mediator" by Augustine of Hippo

The truth is, there is one mediator whom you in your hidden mercy have revealed to the meek and lowly, and have sent as an example of humility to be followed. That is the mediator between God and man, the Man Christ Jesus, who has appeared between mortal sinners and the immortal Just One. As men are, he was mortal; as God is, he was just. And because righteousness issues in life and peace, he, through his righteousness with God, nullified the death of justified sinners by sharing their lot with them....

"True Knowledge" by Diadochus of Photica

True knowledge is the light whereby we can infallibly distinguish good from evil. That limitless light illumines the way of righteousness which leads the mind towards the Sun himself. In that light the mind strives with all its energy after divine charity. Our longing for true knowledge is satisfied by spiritual discourse, provided it comes from God through the exercise of charity. The intellect ceases to be tormented as it concentrates upon the Word of God. Whereas previously it was troubled and made wretched by its worries, now the exercise of love expands the compass of its reflections.

April – 2016

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
					1 8:00-9:15pm – Living Clean NA Group Mtg.	2 6:30pm Vespers
3 9:30am No School 9:40am Hours 9:45am Gen'l Confession 10:00am Divine Liturgy/Social	4	5 7:00-8:00pm – The Grey Book Study Mtg. NA Grp	6 6:30pm Presanctified Liturgy/Potluck	7	8 8:00-9:15pm – Living Clean NA Group Mtg.	9 6:30pm Vespers
10 9:30am Sunday School 9:40am Hours 10:00am Divine Liturgy/Social	11 6:30pm The Canon of St. Andrew of Crete Service	12 7:00-8:00pm – The Grey Book Study Mtg. NA Grp	13 6:30pm Presanctified Liturgy/Potluck	14	15 8:00-9:15pm – Living Clean NA Group Mtg.	16 No Vespers
17 9:30am Sunday School 9:40am Hours 10:00am Divine Liturgy / Social	18	19 7:00-8:00pm – The Grey Book Study Mtg. NA Grp	20 6:30pm Presanctified Liturgy/Potluck	21	22 8:00-9:15pm – Living Clean NA Group Mtg.	23 6:30pm Vespers
24 <u>Palm Sunday</u> 9:30am Sunday School 9:40am Hours 10:00am Divine Liturgy / Social	25 <u>Great and Holy Monday</u>	26 <u>Great and Holy Tuesday</u> 7:00-8:00pm – The Grey Book Study Mtg. NA Grp	27 <u>Great and Holy Wednesday</u> 6:30pm Holy Unction Service/Potluck	28 <u>Great and Holy Thursday</u>	29 <u>Great and Holy Friday</u> 7:00pm Matins Service 8:00-9:15pm – Living Clean NA Group Mtg.	30 <u>Great and Holy Saturday</u> 11:30pm Pascha Service 12:00am Resurrection Divine Liturgy followed by Blessing of Pascha Baskets