

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

Orthodox Church of the Mother of God OCA – Diocese of New York-New Jersey

V. Rev. Dr. Matthew Searfoorce, Rector

Sub-Deacon Edward Dawson Sub-Deacon Vlashi

Parish Council President: Trudy Ellmore Parish Council Vice President: Holly Dawson



Sunday, November 15, 2015

Gospel: Luke 10:25-37

Tone 7

Epistle: Ephesians 2:14-22

24th Sunday after Pentecost (8th of Luke); Holy Martyrs and Confessor Gurias, Samonas and Habibus of Edessa. *Beginning of the Nativity (St. Philip's) Fast.*



**Glory to
Jesus Christ!**

**Glory
Forever!**

*Holy Martyrs and
Confessor Gurias,
Samonas and Habibus of
Edessa.*

*Christ our God, You have granted us the miracles of Your holy martyrs
Gurias, Samonas and Abibas, as a stronghold and protection.
Through their prayers, strengthen those in authority in every good deed,
for You alone are merciful and the Lover of mankind!*

Today the Church Remembers

24th Sunday After Pentecost — Tone 7. Holy Martyrs and Confessors Gurias, Samonas, and Abibus, of Edessa (299-306). Martyrs Elpidius, Marcellus, and Eustochius, who suffered under Julian the Apostate (4th c.). Martyr Demetrius of Thrace (ca. 307). Ven. Paisii (Paisius) Velichkovsky (1794).

Weekly Bulletin Sponsors

For Health of:

Alex Guedes, on his 15th birthday, offered by his family.

Natalie, on her birthday and during her pregnancy, offered with love by Goddaughter Elizabeth, Tammy and Nicholas.

For Memory of:

Deacon David Fabula, who was attached to Saint Andrew Church here, fell asleep in the Lord on the morning of Thursday, November 12, 2015.

Prayer Request:

Protopresbyter Leonid Kishkovsky, undergoing surgery this Monday, November 16, at Winthrop Hospital in New York City, offered by the Diocese of NY/NJ. *May the Divine Physician touch him with His healing power, guide the hands of his surgeons, and grant him healing and restoration of body and soul, and protect and preserve him for many blessed years!*

Liturgical Schedule:

Sunday, November 15th

9:30 am: Sunday School
9:40 am: Hours
10:00 am: Divine Liturgy
Pannikhida Service: Sinitsky Family

Saturday, November 21st

6:30 pm: Vespers

Sunday, November 22nd

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

Saturday, November 28th

6:30 pm: Vespers

Sunday, November 29th

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

Readings:

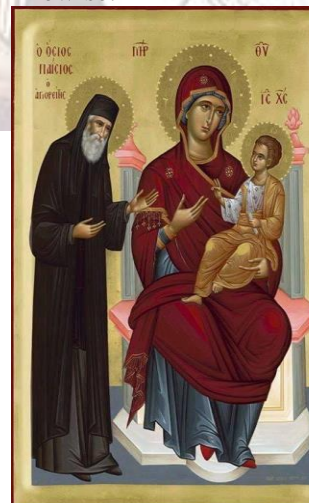
Epistle: Ephesians 2:14-22

Brethren, for he is our peace, who has made us both one, and has broken down the dividing wall of hostility, by abolishing in his flesh the law of commandments and ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby bringing the hostility to an end. And he came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near; for through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father. So then you are no longer strangers and sojourners, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord; in whom you also are built into it for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.

Gospel: Luke 10:25-37 (8th Sunday of Luke)

At that time, a lawyer stood up to put Jesus to the test, saying, "Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" He said to him, "What is written in the law? How do you read?" And he answered, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbour as yourself." And he said to him, "You have answered right; do this, and you will live."

But he, desiring to justify himself, said to Jesus, "And who is my neighbour?" Jesus replied, "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and he fell among robbers, who stripped him and beat him, and departed, leaving him half dead. Now by chance a priest was going down that road; and when he saw him he passed by on the other side. So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan, as he journeyed, came to where he was; and when he saw him, he had compassion, and went to him and bound up his wounds, pouring on oil and wine; then he set him on his own beast and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. And the next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper, saying, 'Take care of him; and whatever more you spend, I will repay you when I come back.' Which of these three, do you think, proved neighbour to the man who fell among the robbers?" He said, "The one who showed mercy on him." And Jesus said to him, "Go and do likewise."



*"A little study
and a lot of prayer.
We must participate
in prayer and
worship with our
whole heart".*

-Saint Paisios



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

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

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

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

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

Bulletin@ChurchMotherOfGod.org

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

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

There will be a Pannikhida service today for the Sinitsky Family: Theckla, Michael, Mary, Samuel, Stephen, John, Stephen, Olga, Annie and Carol.



Orthodox Church of the Mother of God: Parish News

There will be a parish council meeting November 15th immediately following coffee hour.

Dec. 6th St. Nicholas Day there will be decorating of the Christmas tree and a visit from Santa Claus downstairs in the community room immediately following Divine Liturgy.



Sisterhood of the Protector of the Mother of God: Announcements

Dec. 13th there will be a drawing for a Basket of Cheers, tickets are \$1 ea.





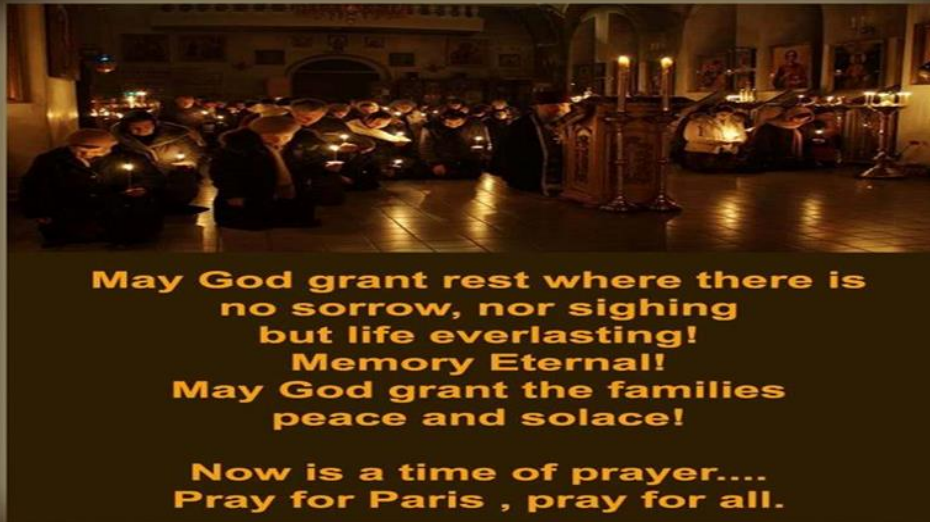
NY/NJ Diocese News

2015 DIOCESAN ASSEMBLY WEBSITE

The annual **Assembly of the Diocese of New York and New Jersey** convened at Saints Peter & Paul Orthodox Church in South River NJ on 10 November 2015. The following day, educational workshops were held for both clergy and laity delegates to the Assembly. The reports presented at the Assembly are now available on-line. Also available are two videos featuring the **Address to the Diocese by Archbishop**

Michael and the **“Year in Review”** along with an array of photos. The special workshop presentation (*“Building Vibrant Orthodox Parishes”*) may be downloaded as well on the dedicated Assembly website.

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@ Brotherhood of the Holy Cross



Orthodox Church in America (OCA) News

Youth Department announces summer service pilgrimage to Alaska
SYOSSET, NY [OCA]

The Orthodox Church in America's [Department of Youth, Young Adult, and Campus Ministry](#) will host a youth/young adult service pilgrimage to Alaska June 11-20, 2016.

The trip is open to those ages 18-30, but limited to 10 participants, who will arrive in Anchorage and travel to Eklutna to help renovate the village's historic cemetery and church under the guidance of Archpriest Mikel Bock. They also will explore native Alaskan culture, history, and the cycle of parish life at Saint Nicholas Church.

Accompanying the participants will be a priest from the “lower-48” who will join Father

Mikel in providing theological reflection and spiritual guidance.

“These trips were common during my college years and provided formative experiences for so many in the Church,” said Andrew Boyd, OCA Youth Director. “It is an immense privilege to be able to serve the historic Church in Alaska, the mother of us all, and a great joy to revive this important program.”

To register your interest and be included on discussions for registration/cost/schedule please email Andrew Boyd at aboyd@oca.org.

Orthodox Christian end-of-life resources now available

SYOSSET, NY [CSHA]



Many family life experiences are common for people in all places. Births, graduations, marriages and other milestones are expected and anticipated. Inevitably, sorrow comes at a loved one’s passing from this earthly life. We have expectations for long life and wholeheartedly sing “Many Years!” to one another. But the day comes when our elderly family members experience the progression of those years. The aging process and disease may take away their independence and they become

incapacitated. Other circumstances may arise when an unforeseeable accident or illness occurs and someone “too young to die” has only months, weeks or days to live. In these situations, recent medical discoveries have enhanced the treatment protocols, some of which create crises for families who face moral, ethical and spiritual dilemmas in end-of-life care. “What is the right thing to do?” “What would he/she want me to do?” “What does my Faith tell me to do?”

As part of its Family Life Ministry, the Orthodox Church in America’s [Department of Christian Service and Humanitarian Aid](#) [CSHA] has long been committed to providing resources for end-of-life care in written form, on-line in Parish Ministry Resources and in conference workshops. But there seemed to be a gap in legal documentation specific for Orthodox Christians that would guide faith-informed decisions.

At the November 2014 CSHA department meeting, a Task Force was established to consider various documents to determine the model that would best serve as an Orthodox Living Will and Advance Directive.

The Holy Synod Liaison to the department, His Eminence, Archbishop Melchisedek, gave his approval of the Task Force and his blessing on the members: Archpriest Thomas Moore, Holy Apostles Church, Columbia, SC, Coordinator; Priest Paul Fetsko, Director of Ethics at Mercy Health Systems, Fort Smith, AR; Deacon Mark Barna, co-author of the book *A Christian Ending*, Charleston, SC; and Nicholas Ressetar, Chief of Staff at Costopoulos, Foster and Fields, Harrisburg, PA. They determined it was best to develop entirely new resource materials based on the Orthodox perspective of end-of-life issues. They worked diligently to develop two comprehensive legal documents consistent with the teachings of the Orthodox Faith. The documents were presented to the Holy Synod of Bishops for approval in July 2015. At their October meeting, they gave their archpastoral blessing for distribution of the documents, which are now available on the OCA web site.

- “[A Gift for my Loved Ones](#).” This package contains everything necessary to know should one become disabled or incapacitated and unable to make decisions on one’s own. It includes a Health Care Power of Attorney and Advance Directive for Health Care—Living Will.
- “[Another Gift for my Loved Ones](#).” This package contains everything necessary to know to arrange a burial and funeral—an Advance Directive for Funeral Care.

The CSHA department urges clergy and faithful of all ages to become familiar with the documents, to reflect and pray about personal desires for medical treatment options, end-of-life care, and funeral and

burial. Print the two documents, discuss them with loved ones and utilize them as legal declarations for final care.



Volunteers Needed to Offer Healthcare and Education in Guatemala

The Orthodox Christian Mission Center (OCMC) is seeking medical/dental professionals, students, and those interested in providing medical/dental care for two upcoming short-term mission teams to Guatemala. These teams, serving from April 8th to the 17th (1st team) and August 26th to September 4th (2nd team), will offer healthcare and education to the Mayan people of Aguacate. This rural village is home to a growing community of Orthodox Christians that do not have access to basic medical/dental services. Please prayerfully consider joining one or both of these vital teams! For more information or to apply, visit http://www.ocmc.org/about/open_teams.aspx, e-mail teams@ocmc.org, or call 1-877-463-6784 ext. 141.

“OCMC Mission Teams need qualified volunteers for 2016. There are openings for hard workers in Albania, Mexico, Guatemala, Uganda, Indonesia, Alaska and Kenya. Details are available on the OCMC website www.ocmc.org. Please consider these opportunities to serve in missions.”

Orthodox Mission Team efforts in 2016 include:

- Albania - Work with youth leaders in Tirana. Mar 19-27.
- Mexico - Offer youth and adult catechism in San Esteban and Pisaflores. Mar 26-Apr 2.
- Guatemala - Provide health care in Aguacate. Apr 8-17.
- Indonesia - Assist with the health care outreach in Medan. May 9-21.
- Uganda - Provide health care in Kampala. May 9-21.
- Albania - Study Orthodox missiology in Albania. May 23-Jun 10.
- Albania - Administer youth programs in Shen Vlash and Tirana. Jun 7-20.
- Guatemala - Offer a Church school program outside Nuevo Conception. Jun 15-28.
- Indonesia - Offer a family and youth outreach in Bali. Jun 28-Jul 11.
- Indonesia - Teach Orthodoxy at schools in Medan. Jun 28-Jul 11.
- Alaska - Participate in a youth and young adult retreat in Kwethluk. Jul 1-11.
- Alaska - Help restore the St. Sophia Church in Bethel. Jul 7-21.
- Alaska - Participate in a youth camp near Pilot Station. Jul 20-30.
- Alaska - Offer a camp program in Old Harbor. Jul 27-Aug 5.
- Kenya - Offer a camp at the Makarios Children's Home orphanage in Nyeri. Aug 10-22.
- Kenya - Lead a retreat and youth camp in Lodwar. Aug 10-22.
- Guatemala - Provide health care in Aguacate. Aug 26-Sep 4.
- Albania - Provide continuing education in Tirana. Aug/Sep 2016.
- Albania - Lead womens' retreats in Trina. Oct/Nov 2016.

Pass this information along and encourage others to *share in a journey of faith*. Additional details and applications are available on our website www.ocmc.org.

***Holy Martyrs and Confessor Gurias,
Samonas and Habibus of Edessa.***



The Holy Martyrs and Confessors Gurias, Samonas and Habibus: during the persecution against Christians under the emperors Diocletian (284-305) and Maximian (305-311). The two friends Gurias and Samonas, preachers of the Word of God, were arrested in the city of Edessa.

The saints refused to offer sacrifice to the gods, and boldly confessed their faith in Christ. For this they were subjected to cruel tortures: they were beaten, hung up by their hands, heavy weights were tied to their feet, and they were cast into a stifling prison.

The martyrs endured everything with firmness and Samonas uttered a prayer to the Lord, which one of the witnesses to their death wrote down: "O Lord my God, against Whose will not a single sparrow falls into the snare. It was You Who made room for David in his sorrow (Ps. 4:1), Who proved the Prophet David stronger than lions (Dan. ch. 6), and granted a child of Abraham to be victor over torture and flames (Dan. ch. 3, ch. 14). You know also, Lord, the infirmity of our nature, You see the struggle set before us. Our foe strives to snatch us, the work of Your right hand, away from You and to deprive us of the glory which is in You. With Your compassionate eye watching over us, preserve in us the inextinguishable light of Your

Commandments. Guide our steps by Your light, and make us worthy of Your Kingdom, for You are blessed unto ages of ages." By night, they took the martyrs out beyond the city and beheaded them (+ 299-306). Christians buried their holy bodies with reverence.

After some years, the last pagan emperor, Licinius (311-324), began a persecution against Christians. Habibus, a deacon of the Church of Edessa whom the emperor ordered to be arrested for his zealous spreading of the true Faith, presented himself before the executioners when he learned they were searching for him. The saint confessed his faith in Christ and was sentenced to be burned alive. The martyr went willingly into the fire and with a prayer surrendered his soul to the Lord. When the fire went out, the mother and relatives of the saint found his body unharmed. They buried the martyr next to Sts Gurias and Samonas.

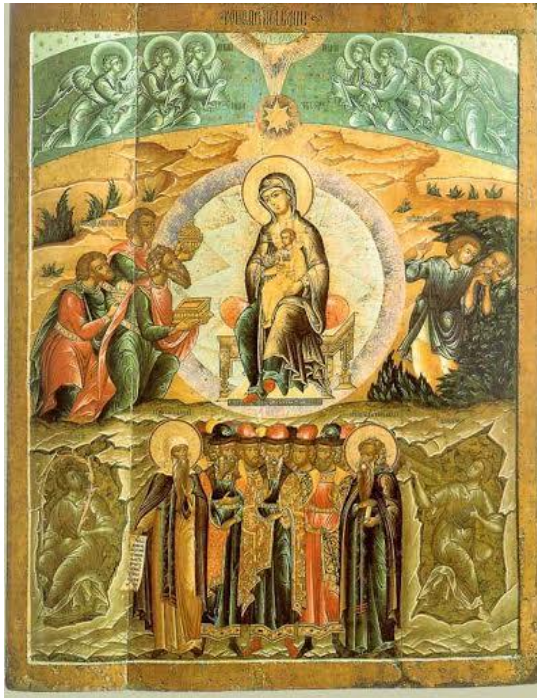
After the death of the saints, numerous miracles were wrought by them for those who entreated their help with faith and love. Once, a certain Gothic soldier, sent to serve at Edessa, took the pious virgin Euphemia as his wife. Before this the barbarian vowed to her mother Sophia at the graves of the Martyrs Gurias, Samonas and Habibus that he would do his spouse no harm, and would never insult her, but would always love and cherish her.

At the completion of his service in Edessa, he took Euphemia with him back to his native land. It turned out that he had deceived her, for he already had a wife at home, and Euphemia became her slave. Her evil husband threatened to kill her if she revealed to anyone that they were married. Euphemia suffered much abuse and humiliation. When she gave birth to a son, the jealous Gothic woman poisoned him. Euphemia turned with prayer to the holy Martyrs Gurias, Samonas and Habibus, the witnesses to the perjurer's oath, and the Lord delivered Euphemia from her suffering and miraculously returned her to Edessa, where she was welcomed by her mother.

After a certain while the Goth was again sent to serve in Edessa. The whole city learned of his misdeeds after he was denounced by Sophia. The Goth was executed by order of the prefect of the city.

In an Akathist, the Holy Church addresses the martyrs: “Rejoice, Gurias, Samonas and Habibus, Heavenly Patrons of honorable marriage.” We pray to them for deliverance from family turmoil, and from marital difficulties, especially where one spouse hates the other without cause.

The Nativity Fast – Why We Fast



November 15, marks the beginning of the Nativity Fast (40 days before Christmas). The following article offers some thoughts on the purpose of fasting.

Fasting is not very alive and well in the Christian world. Much of that world has long lost any living connection with the historical memory of Christian fasting. Without the guidance of Tradition, many modern Christians either do not fast, or constantly seek to re-invent the practice, sometimes with unintended consequences.

There are other segments of Christendom who have tiny remnants of the traditional Christian fast, but in the face of a modern world have reduced the tradition to relatively trivial acts of self-denial.

I read recently (though I cannot remember where) that the rejection of Hesychasm was the source of all heresy. In less technical terms we can say that knowing God in truth, participating in His life, union with Him through humility, prayer, love of enemy and repentance before all and for everything, is the purpose of the Christian life. Hesychasm (Greek Hesychia=Silence) is the name applied to the Orthodox tradition of ceaseless prayer and inner stillness.

But these are incorrectly understood if they are separated from knowledge of God and participation in His life, union with Him through humility, prayer, love of enemy and repentance before all and for everything.

And it is the same path of inner knowledge of God (with all its components) that is the proper context of fasting. If we fast but do not forgive our enemies – our fasting is of no use. If we fast and do not find it drawing us into humility – our fasting is of no use. If our fasting does not make us yet more keenly aware of the fact that we are sinful before all and responsible to all then it is of no benefit. If our fasting does not unite us with the life of God – which is meek and lowly – then it is again of no benefit.

Fasting is not dieting. Fasting is not about keeping a Christian version of kosher. Fasting is about hunger and humility (which is increased as we allow ourselves to become weak). Fasting is about allowing our heart to break.

I have seen greater good accomplished in souls through their failure in the fasting season than in the souls of those who “fasted well.” Publicans enter the kingdom of God before Pharisees pretty much every time.

Why do we fast? Perhaps the more germane question is “why do we eat?” Christ quoted Scripture to the evil one and said, “Man does not live by bread alone but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.” We eat as though our life depended on it and it does not. We fast because our life depends on the word of God.

I worked for a couple of years as a hospice chaplain. During that time, daily sitting at the side of the beds of dying patients – I learned a little about how we die. It is a medical fact that many people become “anorexic” before death – that is – they cease to want food. Many times

family and even doctors become concerned and force food on a patient who will not survive. Interestingly, it was found that patients who became anorexic had less pain than those who, having become anorexic, were forced to take food. (None of this is about the psychological anorexia that afflicts many of our youth. That is a tragedy)

It is as though at death our bodies have a wisdom we have lacked for most of our lives. It knows that what it needs is not food – but something deeper. The soul seeks and hungers for the living God. The body and its pain become a distraction. And thus in God's mercy the distraction is reduced.

Christianity as a religion – as a theoretical system of explanations regarding heaven and hell, reward and punishment, is simply Christianity that has been distorted from its true form. Either we know the living God or we have nothing. Either we eat His flesh and drink His blood or we have no life in us. The rejection of Hesychasm is the source of all heresy.

Why do we fast? We fast so that we may live like a dying man – and in dying we can be born to eternal life.

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

You pour out light over the darkness, Lord, and colors and shapes emerge. You bend Your face over the abyss, whose name is Nothingness, and the abyss tries to depict the beauty of Your face in shadows. All creation expresses You the way the abyss dreams of You.

My lake is also beautiful while the peaceful face of the sun remains bent over it. And all those who pass by praise the beauty of my lake. But as soon as the sun hides its face, my lake becomes dark and abysmal. And no passerby ever offers any praise for the lake except in the presence of the sun or the sun's radiant companions.

The face of the abyss intoxicates those who do not see the sun bent over the abyss. The beauty of things begins when an onlooker bends his face over them. There is no mirror if there is no face in front of the mirror. But even a face in

front of a mirror means nothing if there is no light.

In the light of Your face I pay no attention to any creature. Without You, creatures and I would not be mirrors of one another, but rather darkness, and an abyss, and an opaque chill.

Creation distorts Your beauty the way a dream distorts reality. Creation torments me just as dreams torment me. For what is creation except dreams of Your inexpressible Reality?

My neighbors say: "We have dreamed beautiful dreams." The universe is my witness when I tell you that you are more beautiful than your dreams. The universe also dreams, and cannot dream enough about its own beauty. O my sleepy universe: as long as a dream dreams a dream, one dream is afraid of another, even if one dream seeks an interpreter and comforter in another. Who is prophesying to whom: the dream to reality or reality to the dream?

O my beautiful universe: dream of Reality and Reality will tell you everything. Admit the Reality, of which you are a dream, and you will awaken, and will no longer ramble about beauty, but will be Beauty. There is only one Reality and only one Beauty, and it is the reason for your dream.

Do not tell me, children, about the beauty of the stars. If the Lord withdrew Himself from the stars, your mouths would be struck dumb. Stand in the thick darkness by my lake and try to sing to it. Truly you will be struck dumb and remain silent until the sun dawns, until the sun pours its beauty over the lake and gives your speechless throat its voice.

Your face pours beauty over all creation. The universe swims in Your beauty as a boat swims in the sea.

And when You bend over cold ashes, the ashes are transfigured and receive a face.

Bring my heart to its senses, my Lord, so that it may not be captivated by mortal beauty but by You, my Immortal Beauty.

O my only Beauty!

Allow me to see Your Face, just more and more-
-of Your Face.

Sayings of the Ascetics of the Orthodox Church, XXX:

The Fear of God

(Fear of Offending God With One's Sins)

Sin makes man a coward; but a life in the Truth of Christ makes Him bold.

St. John Chrysostom, On the Statues, VIII.2

The Prologue of Ohrid

St. Nikolai Velimirovic

1. The Holy Martyrs Gurias, Samonas and Habibus

Gurias and Samonas were prominent citizens of Edessa. During one of the persecutions of Christians, they hid outside the city and lived in fasting and prayer, encouraging true believers who came to them for counsel. However, they were captured and brought before the judge, who threatened them with death if they did not submit to the imperial decree demanding idol worship. These holy martyrs of Christ answered him: "If we submit to the imperial decree, we will perish, even if you don't kill us." After cruel torture, they were thrown into prison, where they remained from August 1 to November 10, enduring hunger, darkness and pain. They were then led out and again tortured, but since they remained unwavering in the Christian Faith, they were condemned to death and beheaded in the year 322 A.D., during the reign of the wicked Emperor Licinius. Later Abibus, a deacon in Edessa, suffered tortures for Christ his Lord and gave his spirit to God while in the flames. His mother took his body, miraculously intact, from the fire and buried it in a grave with the relics of St. Gurias and St. Samonas. When the persecution ceased, Christians built a church in honor of the three martyrs, Gurias, Samonas and Abibus, and placed their miracle-working relics

in a common reliquary. Of the numerous miracles of these wonderful saints of God, the following is especially outstanding: A widow in Edessa had a young daughter who was to marry a Gothic soldier serving in the Greek army. As the mother feared for her daughter's safety if she were to live far away, the Goth swore on the grave of the holy three martyrs that he would do no evil to the maiden, but would take her as his lawful wife, as he had already sworn that he was not already married. In reality, he did have a wife, and when he took the young maiden to his country he kept her, not as his wife but as a slave, until his lawful wife died. He then agreed with his kinsmen to bury his living slave with his dead wife. The girl tearfully prayed to the three holy martyrs to save her, and they appeared to her in the grave, and took her in an instant from the land of the Goths to Edessa, to their church. The following day when the church was opened, they found the young maiden by the tomb of the saints of God, and learned of her miraculous deliverance.

2. The Holy Martyrs Elpidius, Marcellus and Eustochius

They suffered for Christ at the time of Julian the Apostate. Elpidius was a senator. Witnessing the torture and miracles of Elpidius, six thousand pagans came to believe in Christ the Lord.

3. The Feast of the Icon of the Holy Theotokos of Kupyatich

This icon first appeared to a maiden named Anna in the village of Kupyatich, in the province of Minsk, in the year 1182 A.D. Tending her flock, Anna saw a light in the forest. When she approached this light she beheld a medium-size cross on a tree, bearing the image of the Most-holy Theotokos. Anna brought this cross home, then returned to her flock. However, to her great amazement, she saw the same cross on the tree in the same place. She took it, placed it in her bosom and brought it home. When she tried to show her father the cross, she reached into her bosom, but the cross was not there. She related everything to her father and went out with him, saw the cross in the forest, and took it home. The next day, the cross was not in the house.

They alerted the whole village, and all the villagers went and beheld the cross and venerated it. The people soon built a church there, and numerous miracles were manifested by this cross bearing the image of the Theotokos. This icon is now to be found in the Church of Holy Wisdom in Kiev.

Hymn of Praise

To the Most-Holy Theotokos

O Most-holy Mother of God, Bride of God,
Thou wast the Bodily Throne of Christ God,
Thou didst bear the King of Glory in thy body,
Thou gavest birth to Him Who gavest life to a
dead world.

By His Blood, His holy Blood, He redeemed the
world,

Gloriously glorifying Himself and thee, O
Virgin.

But thy true glory shines in heaven,
Where thou sittest on the right hand of Christ
Himself.

And the rays of thy glory descend to earth,
And shine at night on the path of the sojourners.
Glory to thee, Mother of God, throughout the
ages,

The first Temple, the wonderful Temple of the
glory of Christ!

Reflection

God most often gives victory in battle to the peacemakers. One example of this is the great Emperor Justinian, and another example is the holy King Stefan of Dečani. Following the death of his father King Milutin, Stefan removed the bandage from his eyes and was joyfully proclaimed as king both by the nobles and by the people. However, Constantine--son of Simonida and Stefan's younger brother on his father's side--raised up an army against Stefan. Stefan then wrote him in the following manner: "You have heard what has happened to me (that is, how I received my sight) by God's providence, that works in all for the good. Shown mercy by God, I have inherited the throne of my parents, to rule over the people in the fear of God and with justice, according to the example of my forefathers. Abandon your undertaking, and come, let us meet with one another; assume the

second place in the kingdom as the second son, and do not rise up with foreigners against your fatherland. Our spacious land is sufficient for both you and me. I am not Cain, the slayer of his brother, but a friend of Joseph, the lover of his brethren. In the words of the latter, I say to you: *You intended evil against me but God intended it for good* (Genesis 50:20)." Thus wrote the holy king, but Constantine did not take heed and was defeated in battle by Stefan. Defeated also was Vladislav, Dragutin's son, another pretender to the Serbian throne. However, Michael Shishman, the Bulgarian king, fared worst of all. Stefan wrote to him: "Reflect on the meaning of Christian love, calm your wrath, let there be love between us as there was between our parents. Cease to shed Christian blood. Turn your weapons against the enemies of the name of Christ and not on Christians. Remind yourself of how hard it will be to answer for innocent blood. Know this also, that he who takes what belongs to others loses what is his." Michael scoffed at this letter from the holy king and was utterly defeated at Velbuzd in 1330 A.D. "God is with the righteous, not with the mighty."

Contemplation

Contemplate the wondrous creation of the world (Genesis 1):

1. How God said: *Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters;*
2. How He divided the waters under the firmament from the waters above the firmament;
3. How He called the firmament heaven.

Homily:

**on the revelation of the wisdom of God to the
heavenly powers**

... To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the Church the manifold wisdom of God (Ephesians 3:10).

Brethren, are the angels all-knowing? They are not; for if they were all-knowing, they would be

gods. God is one, brethren, and the angels are God's beautiful servants. The mystery of the Incarnation was not known to the angels before it took place. And all the other mysteries connected with the mystery of the Incarnation were also unknown to the angels until they saw them revealed in the Church. Therefore the Church is a new revelation, even for the holy angels. The Church is a new revelation of the wisdom and power of God and of His love for man. On the other hand, it is also a new revelation of man's love for God, and man's struggle. Even the angels themselves did not foresee how much God would humble Himself or how much man would be uplifted. This was shown in the Church, and through the Church it was proclaimed to the angels. The Apostle speaks of this to the Ephesians in the words quoted above: *the principalities and powers*--in other words, not even to the chiefs of the angels was everything known beforehand. *The manifold wisdom of God* is that wisdom that was not revealed earlier, and was unknown to the angels and now, in the Church, is shown in countless forms, situations and circumstances.

O my brethren, the two greatest works of God that have been revealed up to now are the creation of the world and the creation of the Church. In both works, brethren, man is the main object of God's love. Let us be thankful with our every breath to the Most-gracious God.

O Gracious God, O Compassionate God, to Thee be glory and praise forever. Amen.

***Thoughts for Each Day of the Year
According to the Daily Church
Readings from the Word of God
By St. Theophan the Recluse***

To the man who asked how to be saved, the Lord on his part offered a question: *What is written in the law? How readest thou?* By this He showed that to resolve all perplexity one must turn to the word of God. And so that there will not be such perplexity at all it is best to always read Divine Scripture attentively, with discernment and sympathy, applying it to your own life, and fulfilling in your own thoughts what relates to thoughts, in your own feelings

and dispositions what relates to the senses, and in your deeds what relates to deeds. One who hearkens to the word of God gathers bright understanding of all that is in him, what is near to him, and what is above him; he clarifies his obligations in all aspects of life, and holy rules, like valuable pearls, are strung onto the thread of his conscience, which then precisely and definitely indicate how and when to act so that he please the Lord. He tames the passions—something reading the word of God always acts to assuage. No matter what passion troubles you, begin to read the word of God and the passion will become quieter and quieter, and at last it will be entirely calmed. He who enriches himself through knowledge of the word of God is overshadowed by the pillar of cloud which guided the Israelites in the desert.

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



Taste the Presence
Taste the presence of Christ beside you

We all need a good dose of silent prayer each and every day. Finding that perfect place in your home that can become your cave, or prayer closet, will afford you that sacred space wherein you can go deep into the heart and connect with God. That place wherein you can close off your family, your worries, your job, your distractions, and go deep into your heart wherein you will find the peace that comes from Christ.

The Jesus Prayer is the perfect prayer, for it is a prayer of adoration and praise, and a prayer that proclaims that Jesus is Lord and, as God, can grant mercy upon you. The simple prayer which invokes the Holy Name of Jesus can transform your life, and take you into the very Heart of

God. This prayer is known as the Prayer of the Heart for the very reason that it is of the heart. Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me a sinner. Said with the aid of a Prayer Rope (thus bringing your body into the action of the prayer), this prayer accomplishes Saint Paul’s admonition that we should “pray always”. It is a prayer that takes you out of yourself and into communion with Christ. It is a prayer that can change your life because through this prayer you can taste the presence of Christ beside you.

With love in Christ,
Abbot Tryphon

Coffee with Sister Vassa – Daily Reflection



Gods and Men

“I said: You are gods, and all of you are sons of the Most High. Nevertheless you will die like men and fall like any one of the princes.” (Ps 81/82: 6-7)

Are we all called “gods” in this Psalm? When Christ quotes this passage, “You are gods,” He explains that here *“He called them gods, to whom the word of God came”* (Jn 10: 35). So – yes. All of us, to whom the word of God “came,” are called “gods,” because through His “coming” we are given to participate in His divinity. He alone is divine by essence, while we are participants in divinity. We still “die like men and fall like any one of the princes.”

The word of God “came” to human beings already at creation, in the creative, life-giving

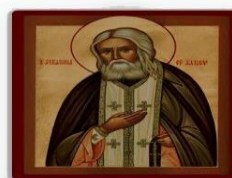
“fiat” of the Creator, Who willed us to be formed in His image and likeness (Gen 1: 26-27). But our “God-likeness” was given to grow and deepen with God’s every revelation of Himself; most particularly when the Word “came” to us in the flesh, when “the Word became flesh and dwelt among us” (Jn 1: 14). And now, after the Incarnation, He shares our human nature, our humanness, and we share in His, becoming one of His, most intimately, in His Body, in which the divine energies of the Holy Spirit pour out abundantly on us: “But as many as received Him, to them He gave the power (ἐξουσίαν) to become children of God, to those who believe in His name” (Jn 1: 12).

So today I carry with me this humbling truth, that we are “gods, and all of us sons of the Most High,” in Christ. In practical terms this truth makes me take pause, and approach myself and other human beings with due honor, as those with “the power to become children of God,” when we “believe in His name.” Let me walk, talk, think, and act with this truth in mind, and His name in my heart.

The Philokalia: Daily Readings

It is said that the highest state of prayer is reached when the intellect goes beyond the flesh and the world, and while praying is utterly free from matter and form. He who maintains this state has truly attained unceasing prayer.

- St Maximos the Confessor, 400 Chapters on Love.



“The fact that I am a monk and you are a layman is of no importance. The Lord listens equally to the monk and to the man of the world

provided both are true believer. He looks for a heart full of true faith into which to send his Spirit. For the heart of a man is capable of containing the Kingdom of God. The Holy Spirit and the Kingdom of God are one.”

— St. Seraphim of Sarov

November – 2015

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1 9:40 Hours 9:45 Gen'l Confession 10:00 Divine Liturgy / Social 12:15 Sisterhood Mtg.	2	3 7:00-8:00pm – The Grey Book Step Mtg. NA Grp	4	5	6 8:00-9:15pm – Living Clean NA Group Mtg.	7 6:30 Vespers
8 9:30 Sunday School 9:40 Hours 10:00 Divine Liturgy / Social	9	10 7:00-8:00pm – The Grey Book Step Mtg. NA Grp	11	12	13 8:00-9:15pm – Living Clean NA Group Mtg.	14 6:30 Vespers
15 9:30 Sunday School 9:40 Hours 10:00 Divine Liturgy / Social 12:15 Council Mtg.	16	17 7:00-8:00pm – The Grey Book Step Mtg. NA Grp	18	19	20 8:00-9:15pm – Living Clean NA Group Mtg.	21 6:30 Vespers
22 9:30 Sunday School 9:40 Hours 10:00 Divine Liturgy / Social	23	24 7:00-8:00pm – The Grey Book Step Mtg. NA Grp	25	26	27 8:00-9:15pm – Living Clean NA Group Mtg.	28 6:30 Vespers
29 9:30 Sunday School 9:40 Hours 10:00 Divine Liturgy / Social	30					