

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 29, 2015**

Gospel: 13:10-17

**Tone 1**

Epistle: Ephesians 5:9-19

*26<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost (10<sup>th</sup> of Luke); Martyr Paramon in Bithynia.*

**Glory to  
Jesus Christ!**



*Martyr Paramon in  
Bithynia.*

**Glory  
Forever!**

*Your holy martyrs Paramon and Philoumenus and those with them,  
O Lord, through their sufferings have received incorruptible crowns from Youu,  
our God. For having Your strength, they laid low their adversaries, and  
shattered the powerless boldness of demons. Through their intercessions,  
save our souls!*

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

**26<sup>th</sup> Sunday After Pentecost — Tone 1.** Martyr Paramon and 370 Martyrs in Bithynia (250). Martyr Philumenus of Ancyra, and with him Martyrs Valerian and Phædrus (ca. 274). Ven. Acacius of Sinai, who is mentioned in *The Ladder* (6th c.). Ven. Nectarius the Obedient, of the Kiev Caves (Near Caves—12th c.). Hieromartyr Abibus (Avíva), Bishop of Nekresi in Georgia (6th c.).

### **Weekly Bulletin Sponsors**

#### **For Health of:**

**Stella Beliaeva**, on her birthday, offered by her family.

#### **For Memory of:**

**Liubov Ziviagintseva**, offered by family and friends.

#### **Prayer Request:**

**Leonard Davis**, Choir Director of Holy Apostles Church in Saddle Brook NJ; recovering from surgery, offered by the Diocese of NY/NJ. *May the Divine Physician touch him with His healing power, grant him restoration of soul and body, and protect and preserve him for many blessed years! "Mnogaya Lyeta!"*

***Liturgical Schedule:***

**Sunday, November 29<sup>th</sup>**

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

**Saturday, December 5<sup>th</sup>**

6:30 pm: Vespers

**Sunday, December 6<sup>th</sup>**

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

**Saturday, December 12<sup>th</sup>**

6:30 pm: Vespers

**Sunday, December 13<sup>th</sup>**

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

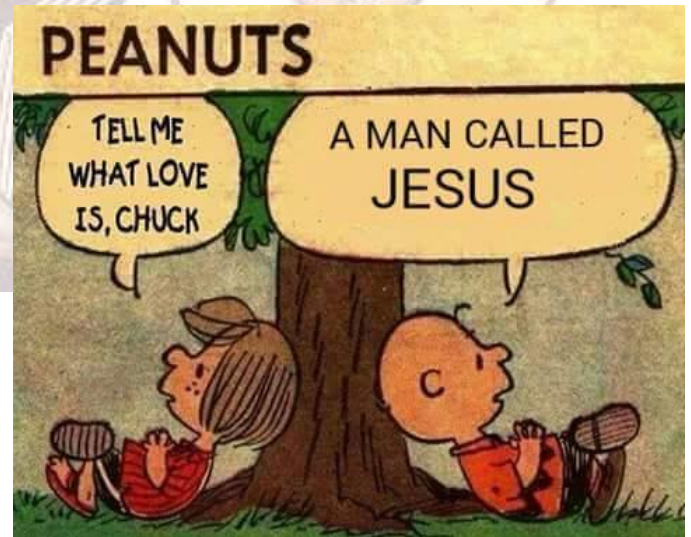
***Readings:***

**Epistle:** Ephesians 5:9-19

**BRETHREN**, the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true. Try to learn what is pleasing to the Lord. Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them. For it is a shame even to speak of the things that they do in secret; but when anything is exposed by the light it becomes visible, for anything that becomes visible is light. Therefore it is said, "Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give you light." Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise, making the most of the time, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. 18 And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery; but be filled with the Spirit, addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with all your heart.

**Gospel:** Luke 13:10-17 (10<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Luke)

**At that time**, Jesus was teaching in one of the synagogues on the Sabbath. And there was a woman who had a spirit of infirmity for eighteen years; she was bent over and could not fully straighten herself. And when Jesus saw her, he called her and said to her, "Woman, you are freed from your infirmity." And he laid his hands upon her, and immediately she was made straight, and she praised God. But the ruler of the synagogue, indignant because Jesus had healed on the Sabbath, said to the people, "There are six days on which work ought to be done; come on those days and be healed, and not on the Sabbath day." Then the Lord answered him, "You hypocrites! Does not each of you on the Sabbath untie his ox or his donkey from the manger, and lead it away to water it? And ought not this woman, a daughter of Abraham whom Satan bound for eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath day?" As he said this, all his adversaries were put to shame; and all the people rejoiced at all the glorious things that were done by him.





**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](mailto:Bulletin@ChurchMotherOfGod.org)

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

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



### *Orthodox Church of the Mother of God: Parish News*

*There will be a parish council meeting December 20<sup>th</sup> immediately following coffee hour.*

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

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

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

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





### ***Sisterhood of the Protector of the Mother of God: Announcements***

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

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



#### **Saint George Orthodox Church**

***What does it mean to “serve out of love?”*** This question was answered on Friday, 20 November 2015, when the children of **Saint George Orthodox Church** School in Buffalo NY came together with their parents and teachers under the guidance of Father Jason Vansuch (parish rector) to learn what it means to help and serve others during this season of the Nativity Fast. In wanting the children to get more involved with the parish outreach ministry, Church School Coordinators (Matushka Katia Vansuch and Natalie Huett) contacted the “Family Help Center,” a local non-profit organization that helps build stronger families by caring for the needs of children and providing support to the entire family.

The Family Help Center has been providing services to families since 1973, focusing on providing children the support they need. Family Help Center is the only 24-hour, 365-day-a-year family crisis intervention and support service in Erie County, New York. It is a multi-service agency providing in-home support services and licensed daycare facility services.

Coming together on the Eve of the Feast of the Entrance of the Theotokos into the Temple during the Nativity Fast and in preparation for Thanksgiving, the children and adults served the Service of “Little Compline” followed by a Thanksgiving Meal (minus the turkey, since it is a fasting period, so they had fish instead) prepared by the parents. After enjoying the delicious meal and fellowship, Father Jason gave a brief talk on the meaning of Thanksgiving and why it is important to help those who may be less fortunate than we.

Following a brief introduction by Natalie Huett, the children were divided into two groups. The older kids, under the direction of the parents and teachers, got to work on preparing posters listing items that the Family Help Center is in most dire need of and that will therefore be collected on an ongoing basis throughout the year. The younger children worked on making the gift tags which were then hung on the giving tree in the parish fellowship hall. Each tag listed the name, age and Christmas wish of a specific child from the Family Help Center. On the following Sunday, during coffee hour, Matushka Katia gave a brief presentation to our parishioners on the Sunday School outreach project. Parishioners were then encouraged to pick a gift tag from the giving tree and help make one special boy or girl’s Christmas wish come true.

***“By the Grace of God and everyone’s generosity,”*** said Father Jason, ***“by the end of the coffee hour all the gift tags were taken! We are so blessed to be able to truly fulfill the words of our Lord in the Gospel of Saint Matthew:”***

*“Assuredly, I say to you,  
inasmuch as you did it to one  
of the least of these  
My brethren,  
you did it to me.”*



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

#### **Diocese of Alaska Assembly emphasizes centrality of stewardship** ANCHORAGE, AK [Diocese of Alaska Communications]

Clergy and lay delegates from as far as Atka Island in the Aleutian Chain, Fairbanks near the Arctic Circle, and elsewhere across the state of Alaska gathered at Saint Innocent Cathedral here November 6-8, 2015 for the annual Assembly of the Diocese of Alaska.

During the opening services, which coincided with the celebration of Saint Demetrius Memorial Saturday, His Grace, Bishop David especially remembered in prayer Matushka Olga Michael, who fell asleep in the Lord on November 8, 1979, together with the diocese’s faithful departed.

In his opening address, Bishop David emphasized the importance parish tithes play in supporting the work of the diocese. “The next year—the ‘Year of the Steward’—will be dedicated to all of us growing in our understanding of stewardship and how we should apply it,” he said. He also spoke of the need for ongoing support for Saint Herman’s Seminary, which provides full scholarships for all Alaskan students.

Bishop David went on to highlight the stewardship various agencies have displayed in making various ministries and missionary efforts in Alaska possible. The Florida-based Orthodox Christian Mission Center [OCMC] provides support for two missionary families in the diocese—Priest David and Matushka Rozanne Rucker, who minister at Saint Herman’s Seminary and within the wider Kodiak community, and Hosea and Pamela DiLullo and their family, who assist the diocese in a variety of capacities through their construction company and religious education efforts. He also expressed gratitude for the many OCMC summer mission teams that help in the villages. International Orthodox Christian Charities was cited for providing training for clergy and seminarians in the area of drug and alcohol counselor training, books for school children, and furniture for the seminary. ROSSIA—the “Russian Orthodox Sacred Sites in Alaska” organization under the leadership of Chugach CEO Sherri Buretta—has provided unmatched assistance in rebuilding and preserving the historic churches in Kenai, Juneau, Unalaska, Chuathbaluk, Tatitlek, Sitka, Karluk and elsewhere.

Bishop David also reported that the Holy Synod of Bishops had appointed him to the Orthodox Church in America’s Canonization Commission while sharing the work he has undertaken researching Matushka Olga’s life. He also spoke of the ongoing effort to locate the grave of Saint Jacob Netsvetov.

Three invited speakers addressed Assembly delegates. Archpriest John Jillions, OCA Chancellor, spoke on the importance of complying with the OCA’s Policies, Standards and Procedures on Sexual Misconduct and Best Practices, aired a photo presentation about the OCA Chancery, and fielded a variety of questions from the floor. Dan Christopoulos, IOCC’s US Country Representative, reported on his work



in assessing diocesan and parish needs for which the agency might offer assistance. In the summer of 2015, he and Gregory Manzuk, IOCC’s Senior Programs Manager, traveled across Alaska to speak with tribal and religious leaders in an effort to gather information on the struggles facing all Alaskans, and especially Native Alaskans. Michael Herzak from the Cleveland, OH-based Guide One Insurance spoke on the various types of coverage needed by churches and explained the liabilities involved in each situation. Churches in Alaska are largely under-insured and at risk.

In related news, it was announced that the blessing cross of Saint Herman of Alaska, damaged during the break-in at Kodiak’s Holy Resurrection Cathedral in June 2015, has been fully restored through the metalworking skills of the cathedral’s Deacon Innocent Philo.



**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](http://www.ocmc.org/about/open_teams.aspx), e-mail [teams@ocmc.org](mailto:teams@ocmc.org), or call 1-877-463-6784 ext. 141.

The LORD is my strength and  
my shield; in Him my heart trusts;  
so I am helped, and my heart  
exults, and with my song  
I give thanks to Him.

PSALMS 28:7

***Martyr Paramon in Bithynia.***



The Holy Martyr Paramon and the 370 Martyrs with him suffered for their faith in Christ in the year 250 during the rule of the emperor Decius (249-251). The governor of the Eastern regions, Aquianus, had locked up 370 Christians in prison, urging them to abjure Christ and instead offer sacrifice to idols.

They subjected the captives to beatings, hoping by torture and the threat of death to persuade them to renounce Christ and worship the pagan gods. One of the local inhabitants, Paramon by name, openly denounced the cruel governor and confessed his faith in the One True God, the Lord Jesus Christ. They beheaded St Paramon after fierce tortures, together with the other 370 martyrs.

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

*My hope awaits You, Lord.*

Expecting You is the only content and meaning of my Tomorrow and the Day after Tomorrow.

The grass expects the dew and is not disappointed. The mountain expects the thunder, and is not disappointed. The mole in the ground expects its meal, and is not disappointed. You fulfill the expectations of all beings.

I am expecting You, and You are coming to meet me. With the same haste that I am approaching You, You are coming toward me.

What is Tomorrow, children of earth, except your hope. If you eradicate all your hope, your desire to see Tomorrow dawn will die.

Do not grumble against Heaven because It does not fulfill all your hopes. Grumble against yourselves, because you do not know how to hope. Heaven does not fulfill hopes but hope. The most sublime and steadfast hope Heaven always fulfills. Do not grumble against Heaven because It does not see the benefits for your family and your factions and enter into your intrigues against one another. Heaven is discerning and merciful. It is discerning for anything good in any faction, and is merciful towards your infirmity, provided that good will accompanies it.

My hope is not an inkling but a certainty that You will come. You promised, and I bear the seal of Your promise in my soul. If You have not come yet, it is not Your fault but mine. You are tender and compassionate, and would not wish to make me ashamed of my unpreparedness. Therefore, You approach slowly, and continuously announce Your coming.

Hopelessness sits idle. But my hope cleans and washes continuously; it airs out and censes the quarters where it will receive You. And it frets day and night lest it forget anything whatsoever that might be pleasing to You. And it continuously calls upon the angels and the saints, the mystery-seers, to show it how to make its cave like Heaven.

My hope has no other partners. I have chased out of myself all other hopes as proven imposters. And now in their place there sprouts only one hope, which awaits You.

When You come You will bring me the richest gifts. With You, O Victorious One, will come my victory over all boredoms and worries. With You will come light, and health, and strength, and wisdom and the complete fulfillment of all human expectations from the beginning to the end of time.



In truth, the people with many hopes, that exclude You, sit on the mountain and wait for the sun to rise from the West.

But I stand facing the East, and I know for certain that the sun will soon be born. For I see the dawn becoming rosy.

Others plant dry rods in the ground, and hope for greenery and fruit. But over my field I sowed living seed, which is turning green and bearing fruit.

My hope in You is not a myth but a certainty--as certain as the fact that the sun must rise from the East and that good seed, when sown on good soil, must sprout.

The field is Yours, and You are the sower and the seed.

Come, O Lord, my hope awaits You!

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

#### **The Fear of God**

*(Fear of Offending God With One's Sins)*

Whoever fears God stands above all manner of fear. He has become a stranger to all the fear of this world and placed it far from himself, and no manner of trembling comes near him.

St. Ephraim the Syrian, On the Fear of God and the Last Judgement

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### *The Prologue of Ohrid*

*St. Nikolai Velimirovic*

#### **1. The Holy Martyr Paramon and 370 others with Him**

In Asian Bithynia, Governor Aquilinus fiercely persecuted Christians. Once, he captured 370 Christians, brought them with him, and bound them at a place where there was an idolatrous temple of the god Poseidon. Here, the wicked governor tried to force them to worship and offer sacrifice to the idol. Even though the governor threatened death for anyone who did not obey his order, not a single Christian submitted. Just then, a respected man by the name of Paramon passed along the road beside the temple. He stopped beside the masses of

shackled people and learned what was happening. Then he cried out: "Oh, how many innocent righteous ones does this foul governor desire to slaughter, because they will not worship his dead and mute idols?" Paramon then continued on his way, and the infuriated governor sent his servants to slay him. The servants caught up to Paramon, seized him and pierced his tongue with a thorn, then stripped him naked and stabbed his entire body. Holy Paramon, with prayer in his heart, gave up his soul to God. After that, the 370 martyrs, great as sons of God and innocent as lambs, were beheaded and thus entered into the Immortal Kingdom of Christ the Lord. They suffered in the year 250 A.D.

#### **2. The Venerable Acacius of Sinai**

In his famous book, *The Ladder*, St. John Climacus relates the life of this saint. The young Acacius was a novice under an evil elder in the monastery on Sinai. The irascible elder daily reproached and insulted Acacius and often beat, tormented and maltreated him in every possible way. However, Acacius did not complain but endured this all patiently, with the assurance that it was beneficial for his salvation. Whenever anyone asked him how he was doing, he replied: "Well, as before the Lord God!" After nine years of obedience and torment, Acacius died. The elder buried him and then expressed sorrow to another elder saying: "Acacius, my disciple died." "I do not believe it," replied the holy elder, "Acacius did not die." Then both of them went to the grave of the dead man and that holy elder cried out: "Brother Acacius, did you die?" Acacius, obedient even after death replied: "Father, I have not died, for it is impossible for an obedient one to die." Then, the evil elder repented and shut himself in a cell near Acacius's grave where, in repentance and prayer, he spent the remainder of his life.

#### **3. The Holy Martyr Dionysius, Bishop of Corinth**

He was an eminent pastor and teacher. He was beheaded for Christ in the year 182 A.D.

#### **4. Saint Tiridates, King of Armenia**



Tiridates was a contemporary of Diocletian. At first, he furiously persecuted Christians, but God's punishment befell him and he went insane and became like a beast, as had happened to King Nebuchadnezzar. Tiridates was miraculously healed of his insanity by St. Gregory of Armenia (September 30). From then until his death, Tiridates spent his life in repentance and devotion. He died peacefully in the fourth century.

### **5. The Holy Martyr Apollonius**

Apollonius was a Roman senator. Accused because of his faith in Christ, he confessed it before the entire senate, for which he was beheaded with the sword in Rome in the year 186 A.D.

#### **Hymn of Praise**

*The Venerable Acacius of Sinai*

The elder summoned his novice:  
"Brother Acacius, where are you?"

The elder called once more:

"Acacius, are you dead?"

"No, Father, I am not dead,"

The monk humbly replied,  
"For him who faithfully obeys,  
There is no death."

The irascible elder was amazed,  
Amazed, and began to weep.

The elder bitterly wept,  
And repented of his wickedness.  
Why does the cruel elder repent?

Truly, he has a reason.  
Into the wilderness, the sinner went  
To atone for his evil.

Acacius, the wondrous monk,  
By obedience, saved his soul;  
And his soul now rejoices,  
And his name is glorified.

#### **Reflection**

God's punishment often befalls sinners immediately after the sin, that the sinners may fear and the righteous be encouraged. However, sometimes it falls much later, suddenly and unexpectedly, that sinners may know that God forgets nothing. Dathan and Abiram were

swallowed up by the earth immediately after their sin, but King Balthazar saw the hand that wrote his death sentence when he felt most fortunate at a banquet among his friends and admirers.

A gravely ill soldier was brought to St. Stephen the New to be healed by him through prayer. Stephen told him to venerate the icons of Christ and the Holy Theotokos. The soldier did this and was immediately restored to health, and this miracle was spoken of everywhere. Hearing of this, the iconoclastic Emperor Constantine Copronymus summoned this soldier and questioned him. When the soldier confessed that he received healing from the holy icons, the emperor reproached him with fury for venerating them. The frightened soldier repudiated the veneration of icons before the emperor and grew ashamed of his faith in them. When the soldier left the court and mounted his horse, the horse went wild under him, threw him off and trampled him with its hooves until he gave up his soul. Behold: a punishment immediately following sin.

King Tiridates, a persecutor of Christians, threw St. Gregory into a pit and killed thirty-seven holy nuns, but no punishment befell him. Later, when the king and his companions went hunting for pleasure, he and his entourage were seized by sudden madness. The reason for his madness and the means to restore him were revealed to his pious sister in a dream. St. Gregory was taken out of the pit, and by his prayers King Tiridates became healthy, repented and was baptized.

Punishment sometimes quickly follows sin as the day follows the night, yet sometimes slowly, as year follows year. But it never fails to come, except where repentance takes the place of punishment.

#### **Contemplation**

Contemplate God's wonderful Paradise (Genesis 2):

1. How God adorned Paradise with every kind of tree pleasant to the sight and good for food;
2. How God planted the Tree of Life in the midst of Paradise;

3. How God only forbade Adam to eat of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil.

**Homily:**  
**on the Church's compact structure, similar to a body**

*From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part (Ephesians 4:16).*

This word, brethren, is on the spiritual body, God's holy Church. From Him, that is, from Christ, *the whole body is fitly joined together and compacted*. The most wise Apostle cannot find a better comparison for the Church than the human body. What the head is to the human body, so is Christ the Lord to the body of the Church. From the head, the nerves spread through all parts of the body, and through the nerves, all the parts of the body perceive, feel and move; and their life lies in this perception, feeling and movement. It can be said that the head, through the brain and the nerves, is present in every part of the body. If the head is cut off, every part of the body becomes dead in an instant. Christ is present in every part of the Church, in every faithful member of it. Through Him, each of the faithful perceives the spiritual kingdom, feels love and moves aright toward God. From Him, every member receives strength *according to the effectual working in the measure*, that is, according to function and gift. The Lord gives this strength directly, by contact, by touch, by His personal presence. Love is a wonderful bond that binds Christ to the faithful, the faithful to Christ and the faithful to one another. Brethren, what happens to one part of the body when it is torn away from the nerves that link it to the head? It becomes inactive, insensitive and motionless: dead. This also happens with every member of the Church who leaves the structure of the Church, and thus severs his tie with the Head of the Church. Brethren, may God preserve us from this calamity!

O Lord Jesus, the Source of life and love, do not allow any dark power, within us or without us, to separate us from Thee and Thy Body, Thy

Holy Church that Thou hast purchased with Thy precious blood.

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

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

Having spoken the parable about the man who became rich and planned to just eat, drink and be merry, and for this was struck with death, not remaining alive for the supposed pleasures, the Lord concluded: *So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.* “So”—that is, such occurs, or such a lot befalls both these and others. Those who become rich and forget about God only think about pleasures of the flesh. Let those who desire to avoid this bitter lot “lay up” not “unto themselves, but be rich only toward God.” Since riches come from God, then devote them to God when they flow, and holy riches will come of it. Divide all surplus with the needy: this will be the same as returning to God what was given by God. He who gives to a poor person gives to God. Seemingly exhausting his riches, such a person becomes truly rich—rich through good deeds, rich for God. In pleasing Him he becomes rich in God, and by attracting His good will, he becomes rich from God, Who makes one who is faithful over a few things, ruler over many things. He becomes rich toward God, and not toward himself, for he does not consider himself to be master of the house, but only a steward and accountant, whose entire concern consists of satisfying all who come to him in need. But he fears spending anything in particular on himself, considering it to be an improper usage of property entrusted to him.

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





### **Suffering**

#### ***The role of suffering in the salvation of human kind***

Elder Ambrose of Optina Monastery said, “We should not forget that in our age of ‘sophistication’ even little children are spiritually harmed by what they see and hear. As a result, purification is required, and this is only accomplished through bodily suffering....You must understand that Paradisal bliss is granted to no one without suffering.”

A person has salvation not only by his good deeds, but also by his patient suffering of various griefs, illnesses, misfortunes, loss, and failures (Luke 16:19-31, Mark 8:31-38, Romans 6:3-11, Hebrews 12:1-3, and Galatians 6:14). Jesus Christ gives us the power which is needed for transformation, and prepares us to live with a strength under the most difficult conditions, preparing us for the peace that is eternal.

Heaven and Hell are a condition of relationship with God that is either theosis or perdition. The lake of fire and heaven occur within the same realm, both being not about places, but about relationship. For one who hates God such a place as in the presence of God, will be eternal suffering. The Orthodox Church teaches that Heaven and Hell are in the same realm, and that Hell is not separation from God symbolically or physically, Hell is a place chosen.

Without suffering, we cannot join ourselves to the cross, and when we do take up our cross in suffering, it is with our Co-Suffering Saviour. Sickness and suffering are not given to us by a wrathful and punitive God because we have sinned, but rather allowed by this loving God who co-suffers with us. It is Western juridical misconceptions concerning sin which has tended to distort a proper recognition of suffering and its connection to sin.

With love in Christ,  
Abbot Tryphon

### ***Coffee with Sister Vassa – Daily Reflection***



### **Praying for Others**

*“When they came to the place called The Skull, there they crucified him and the criminals, one on the right and the other on the left. But Jesus was saying, ‘Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing.’” (Lk 23: 33-34)*

Here, from His cross, the Lord demonstrates to me the ultimate form of self-giving: Despite His own, extreme suffering, He expresses concern for others, praying for them. For Christ, this historical moment, when He hangs on the cross for the life of the world, is not “all about Him.” In prayer, He remains in the Spirit of human-divine fellowship, appealing to the Father in loving concern for His fellow-human beings.

When it comes to my own little cross-carrying journey today, I am reminded not to make it all “about me.” Whatever difficulties or challenges I face today, be it grief, illness, conflict, disappointment, financial insecurity, misunderstanding, or whatever; let me take time to see beyond my own concerns and pray for others. It is a quiet form of self-giving that helps me not only to move out of self-centeredness, but also to place God and His will in the center of my relationship with others.

So today let me contribute a bit of my prayer-

time to prayer for others, placing them and myself in God’s hands.

***The Philokalia: Daily Readings***

An intelligent use of conceptual images and their corresponding physical objects produces self-

restraint, love and spiritual knowledge; an unintelligent use produces licentiousness, hatred and ignorance.

- St Maximos the Confessor, 400 Chapters on Love.

## December – 2015

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