

+ SAINTS PETER AND PAUL ORTHODOX CHURCH

A Parish of the Orthodox Church in America
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Glory to Jesus Christ! Glory to God For All Things!

November 22, 2015 25th Sunday after Pentecost
November 28 Saturday
November 29 26th Sunday after Pentecost

Divine Liturgy 9:30 am
Great Vespers 4:00 pm
Divine Liturgy 9:30 am

Saints of the Day: Apostles Philemon and Archippus, Martyr Apphia, wife of Philemon, and Saint Onesimus, disciple of Saint Paul (ca. 109). Martyrdom of Saint Michael, Prince of Tver (1318). New Hieromartyr Priest Vladimir (1932). New Hieromartyr Iosaph Bishop of Mogilev, New Hieromartyrs Priests John, Basil, Paul, Jacob, Theodore, John, Ilia, Alexis, Aphanasius and Hieromartyr Gerasimus (1937). Venerable Paraskeva Confessor (1952). Saint Yaropolk-Peter, Prince of Vladimir in Volhynia (1086). Martyrs Cecilia, Valerian, Tiburtius, and Maximus at Rome (288). Martyr Procopius the Reader at Caesarea in Palestine (303). Martyr Menignus at Parium (250). Venerable Agabbas of Syria (5th c.). Righteous Michael the Soldier of Bulgaria (866). Saint Callistus II, Patriarch of Constantinople (Mount Athos) (1397). Saint Clement of Ochrid, Bishop of Greater Macedonia (916). Saint Germanus of Eikoiphinissa in Macedonia (9th c.). Martyrs Stephen, Mark, and Mark (another) at Antioch in Pisidia (4th c.). Martyr Agapion of Greece (304).

Please remember in your prayers: Suffering Christians of Egypt, Syria, the Middle East and Ukraine. Bishop Boulos and Bishop Yohanna, of Aleppo. Archimandrites Athanasy, Nectarios, Luke, Pachomy. Archpriests Alvian, Eugene, Leonid, John, Jason, John, Vincent. Priests Jacobus, Leonid, Andrew. Deacons Mark, Demetrios, Philip. Mother Victoria. Mothers Raphaela, Michaela, Catherine, Anna. Sister Piama. Monk Victor, Matushka Joanna, Mary, Valentina, Dimitri, Nina, Daniel, Helen, Catherine, Anna, Peter, Helen, Michael, Stephanie, Zara, Nolan, Emelie, Michael, Ed, Nettie, Anita, Maria, Michael, John, Linda, James, Nancy, Susan, Daniel, Aaron, Nicole, Ashley, Mark, Cathy, Jennifer, Nina, Nadine, Michael, Anna, Gregory, Marianna, Isaiah, Jamie, Albert, Kevin, Robert, Robert, Andrew, Betty, David, Warren.

Memory Eternal. Prayers for the repose of Olga Prawlocki were offered today at Liturgy and Litiya at the request of Cheryl Lower and Stephanie Litwen.

Memory Eternal. Prayers for the repose of Paul and Kay Sokol were offered today at Liturgy and Litiya at the request of the "Memory Eternal Requiem Service Fund."

Thank You! Thank you to all who helped with our Bake Sale – bakers, perogi pinchers, rollers and fillers, cooks, cleaner-uppers and patrons. God bless those who love the beauty of His house!

At the request of our parishioner Lauren Jedlan, we announce: Holy Trinity Monastery (Jordanville) needs to raise fifty thousand dollars before December 2 in order to receive the matching donation. Could you please contact others to let them know that the Monastery needs to receive donations? Your help would be deeply appreciated.

Reflections in Christ / Father Steven Kostoff THE NATIVITY FAST VS. "GETMAS"

Sunday, November 15, we entered into the forty-day Nativity Fast, or Advent, that prepares us liturgically and personally for the Feast of our Lord's Nativity in the Flesh on December 25. This is a sacred season because it leads us toward the awesome event of the Incarnation, expressed so powerfully in the Gospel according to Saint John: "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us full of grace and truth [John 1:14]."

It is also the time of year that more than ever reflects what I call the "battle of the calendars"—our ecclesiastical calendar with its ongoing liturgical cycle and rhythm of fasting and feasting and the secular calendar that is basically oblivious of the Christian revelation (though "Christmas" may show up on it). But even if Christmas appears on both calendars, the path to that event is very different according to the two calendars! The secular calendar has every day theoretically open to "partying" all the way up through the long-awaited Christmas gift opening/exchange and the final dinner party to follow. Eat, drink and be merry, it is the holiday season! Yet, the ecclesiastical calendar directs us to fast up to the Feast with the year's longest fast-free period—December 25 through January 4—to follow. History is with the Church, for in centuries past, Christian society would spend the "twelve days of Christmas" in a festal mood after December 25 itself. The contrast is rather stark, so the choices present to us reflect two very different approaches to how we will celebrate Christmas. When the Lord comes we will celebrate; but the time of expectation—the Nativity Fast—we will spend in vigilant prayer, fasting and almsgiving.

Fasting implies restraint, and restraint is not only about the types of food and drink that we consume. Last year I recall one of my priest friends telling me of a clever yet convicting way of describing the consumer twist that we now inflict upon the Feast of Christ's birth. For our society as a whole, Christmas has

become “Getmas.” Getmas is all about “getting” as much as possible, with no real restraint applied to the getting process. How many children evaluate a “good Christmas” based upon what they “get?” (Not all adults are exempt from such an evaluation I would imagine). Not to get everything on the list could spoil the event. Warming all of this up with a bit of Jesus in the manger is hardly a well-thought out response to the travesty of Getmas. Of course, there is giving as well as getting. But even that can be one more face of the consumer-driven event of the secular calendar. In our Orthodox tradition, fasting is part of an over-all discipline that seeks to free us from the constraints and demands of the world and its passions. Yet, what if we succeed in not eating meat for forty days, but still shop till we drop? What if we fast from food but make the mall more of a “home away from home” than the church? What if we practice a bit of charity for Christmas, yet spend way beyond our designated budget and get in further debt over Getmas? That sounds like placing the form over the substance of true religious piety.

Over the years I admit to having become something of an ecclesiastical Scrooge; but the hypocrisy of abandoning Christ while maintaining the spirit of maximal spending and consuming has taken its toll on my over-all appreciation of the world’s embrace of Christmas—an embrace which has inexorably and unapologetically led to “Getmas.”

THE HOLY MARTYR CECILIA was born in Rome of wealthy and eminent parents. She had great faith in Christ the Lord and a great zeal for the Faith. Vowing life-long virginity to God, Saint Cecilia wore a coarse hair shirt beneath the costly raiment that her parents gave her. When her parents coerced her into marriage with Valerian, a pagan, Cecilia counseled her bridegroom on their wedding night to go to Bishop Urban to be baptized, and then live in chastity. Accepting the Christian Faith, Valerian also converted his brother Tiburtius. Soon after, both brothers were condemned to death for their faith. But their faithfulness did not falter, even in the face of death. Led to the place of execution, these wonderful brothers also succeeded in converting the captain of the guard, Maximus, to the Faith. Then all three suffered together for Christ the Lord. Saint Cecilia buried their bodies together. Cecilia was then brought to trial, for she tirelessly won pagans over to the Christian Faith. In only one evening, she won over four hundred souls. When the judge asked her from whence such boldness came, she answered: “From a pure conscience and undoubting faith.” After cruel torture, Cecilia was condemned to beheading. The executioner struck her three times on the neck with the sword, but he was unable to kill her. She was only wounded, and blood flowed from her wounds, which the faithful collected in handkerchiefs, sponges and bowls for the sake of healing. Three days after this, the martyr and virgin of Christ gave her soul to her Lord, with Whom she eternally rejoices. St. Cecilia suffered with the others in about the year 230. Her relics lie in Rome, in the church dedicated to her. In the Western Church, Saint Cecilia is regarded as the patroness of church singing and music.

REFLECTION by Saint Nikolai of Zhicha

Every effort of learning is in vain without the effort of attaining purity of faith and life. The heavenly world is revealed not to the learned but to the pure. When Saint Cecilia was led to the bridal chamber with her bridegroom Valerian on the first night, she said him: “I want to tell you a mystery: standing here is an angel of God, the guardian of my virginity, whom you do not see. He stands ready to protect me, his handmaid, from assault. If you only touch me, he will kill you.” Valerian begged Cecilia to show him the angel, so that he could see it, too. The virgin replied: “You are a man who knows not the true God. You cannot see the angel of God until you cleanse yourself of the foulness of your unbelief.” When Valerian was baptized, he saw the angel in great light and ineffable beauty. So, too, when Valerian's brother Tiburtius changed his life from impurity to purity in baptism, he saw holy angels and spoke with them. Maximus their fellow sufferer as well, when the two brothers were beheaded, vowed with a great oath before the executioners and the people, saying: “I see angels of God shining like the sun, taking the souls of these martyrs from their bodies like beautiful virgins from the bridal chamber, and leading them to heaven with great glory.” But that which he saw, none of the impure unbelievers were able to see.

SAINT CALLISTUS, PATRIARCH OF CONSTANTINOPLE is called “Xanthopoulos” after the cell of that name on Mount Athos, where he lived for a long time in asceticism with his companion, Ignatius. With this same Ignatius, Saint Callistus wrote in one hundred chapters of his personal experience of a life of stillness. This work occupies a very prominent place in ascetical literature. Callistus was greatly influenced by his teacher, Saint Gregory of Sinai, and wrote his Life. Having become Patriarch of Constantinople, Saint Callistus became ill and reposed while on a journey to Serbia. Before he undertook his journey this was prophesied to him by Saint Maximus of Kapsokalyvia of the Holy Mountain.

THE HOLY MARTYR MENIGNUS was born on the Hellespont. He worked as a linen-bleacher, for which he was called “the Fuller.” At the time of Emperor Decius, he tore up the imperial decree declaring a persecution of Christians. For this, he was thrown into prison, where the Lord Himself appeared to him and encouraged him, saying: “Be not afraid, I am with thee.” At that moment his chains melted like wax, the prison opened of itself, and he went out. He was arrested again and tried. They tortured him inhumanly, severing his fingers and toes and beheading him. At night, his severed head glowed like a lamp.

THE HOLY RIGHTEOUS MICHAEL THE SOLDIER was a Bulgarian by birth. With his companions, he fought in the Greek army against the Hagarenes and Ethiopians, where he displayed marvelous fearlessness. He killed a terrible serpent and freed a maiden. Soon afterward, this righteous man took up his abode in eternal life. He lived and reposed in the ninth century. He was first buried somewhere in Thrace, but Emperor Kalo-John translated his relics to Trnovo in 1206.