

+ SAINTS PETER AND PAUL ORTHODOX CHURCH

A Parish of the Orthodox Church in America
305 Main Road, Herkimer, New York, 13350 • 315-866-3272
Archpriest John Udics, Rector • e-mail: john.udics@gmail.com
Deacon Demetrios Richards • e-mail: dwr00nhr@twcny.rr.com
Parish Web Page: www.cnyorthodoxchurch.org

Glory to Jesus Christ! Glory to God For All Things!

November 29, 2015	26 th Sunday after Pentecost	Divine Liturgy	9:30 am
December 5	Saturday	Great Vespers	4:00 pm
December 6	27 th Sunday after Pentecost	Divine Liturgy	9:30 am

This week's Bulletin is given in memory of Jennie Risucci, mother of Lauren Jedlan. Memory Eternal!

Saints of the Day: Martyr Paramon and 370 Martyrs in Bithynia (250). Martyr Philumenus of Ancyra, and with him Martyrs Valerian and Phaedrus (274). Venerable Acacius of Mt. Latros, who is mentioned in The Ladder (6th c.). New Hieromartyr Priest Sergius (1941). Venerable Nectarius the Obedient of the Kiev Caves (12th c.). Hieromartyr Abibus, Bishop of Nekressi in Georgia (6th c.). Venerable Pitirim of Egypt (4th c.), Disciple of Venerable Anthony the Great. Hieromartyr Dionysius, Bishop of Corinth (182). Saint Tiridates, King of Armenia (4th c.). Saint Saturninus, Martyr and Bishop of Toulouse (257). Saint Sadwen (Sadwrn, Saturninus) of Wales, Hermit (6th c.). Saint Ethelwin, Hermit of Athelney. Saint Nicholas, Archbishop of Thessalonica. Hieromartyr John of Persia. Saint Urban of Macedonia, Bishop. Saint Pancosmius, Monk. Saint Radboud, Bishop of Utrecht (917). Saint Brendan of Birr, Abbot (571).

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, Paul, 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.

God Grant Many Years! Prayers for the health of Matthew Pintar, Father Paul Oikawa, Sophia Philips and Archimandrite Nectarios (Cottros) were offered at Liturgy and Moleben at the request of Father John Udics.

Memory Eternal. Prayers for the repose of John P. Woods, Jr. were offered at Liturgy and Litiya on November 22 at the request of Deacon Demetrios and Matushka Anastasia Richards.

Memory Eternal. Prayers for the repose of Olga Prawlocki were offered today at Liturgy and Litiya at the request of Helen Homyk.

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

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.”

SAINT BRENDAN OF BIRR, ABBOT Died c. 562. Breandan is Gaelic for Prince. Born into the family of Fergus MacRoy, Saint Brendan of Birr a contemporary of Saint Brendan the Voyager (f.d. May 16), and his fellow-disciple under Saint Finian (f.d. December 12) at Clonard Abbey. An ancient, but incomplete, manuscript says that the 12 apostles of Ireland, who were together at Finian's school, saw a wonderful flower from the Land of Promise. Although today's saint was chosen by lot to go in search of that land, he was too old or frail for adventuring. Brendan of Clonfert went in his stead.

His abbey of Birr was somewhere near Parsonstown, Offaly. The ruins are said to be near Emmet Square where Old Saint Brendan's church stands. He was the great friend and adviser of Saint Columba (f.d. June 9). He intervened at a synod of Meltown (Meath) to end Columba's excommunication. Later, Columba had a vision of Saint Brendan's soul being carried by angels to heaven at the moment of his death. Columba immediately said a special Requiem for Brendan at Iona many days before he had confirmation of his mentor's death.

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.

SAINT TIRIDATES, KING OF ARMENIA 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 Saint 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.

REFLECTION by Saint Nikolai of Zhicha

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 Saint 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 Saint 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. Saint 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.