

Saints Peter and Paul Orthodox Church

Albanian Archdiocese - OCA

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Rev. Nicholas Dellermann – Rector (860-861-7468)

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 4
Afterfeast of the Meeting
Ven. Isidore of Pelusium

Tone 2
Troparion
(Resurrection)

*When Thou didst descend to death,
O Life immortal,
Thou didst slay hell with the
splendor of Thy Godhead.
And when from the depths Thou
didst raise the dead,
all the powers of heaven cried out:
“O Giver of life, Christ our God,
glory to Thee!”*

Tone 1
Troparion
(Feast)

*Rejoice, O Virgin Theotokos, Full of
Grace!
From thee shone the Sun of
Righteousness, Christ our God,
enlightening those who sat in
darkness.
Rejoice and be glad, O righteous
Elder,
thou didst accept in thine arms the
Redeemer of our souls,
Who grants us the Resurrection!*

Tone 8
Troparion
(Ven. Isidore)

*The image of God was truly
preserved in thee, O Father,
for thou didst take up the Cross
and follow Christ.
By so doing, thou taughtest us to
disregard the flesh for it passes
away;
but to care instead for the soul, for
it is immortal.
Therefore thy spirit, venerable
Isidore, rejoices with the angels.*

Tone 1
Kontakion
(Resurrection)

*Hell became afraid, O almighty
Savior,
seeing the miracle of Thy
Resurrection from the tomb!
The dead arose! Creation, with
Adam, beheld this and rejoiced
with Thee,
and the world, my Savior, praises
Thee forever.*

Tone 4
Kontakion
(Ven. Isidore)

*Finding thee to be another
morning star, O glorious one,
the Church is illumined by the
brilliance of thy words.
She cries out to thee: “Rejoice, all-
blessed and divinely-wise Isidore!”*

Tone 2
Kontakion
(Feast)

*By Thy Nativity Thou didst
sanctify the Virgin’s womb
and didst bless Simeon’s hands, O
Christ God.
Now Thou hast come and saved us
through love.
Grant peace to all Orthodox
Christians,
O only Lover of Man!*

❧ **Prokeimenon** ❧

Tone 2 (Resurrection)

The Lord is my strength and my song; / He has become my salvation. (Ps. 117:14)

V. The Lord has chastened me sorely, but He has not given me over to death. (Ps. 117:18)

Tone 3 (Song of the Theotokos)

My soul doth magnify the Lord, / and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Savior. (Lk. 1:46-47)

The Epistle Reading

The reading is from St. Paul's Second Letter to the Church at Corinth 4:6-15

Brethren, it is the God who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ. But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, to show that the transcendent power belongs to God and not to us. We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies. For while we live we are always being given up to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus may be manifested in our mortal flesh. So death is at work in us, but life in you. Since we have the same spirit of faith as he had who wrote, "I believed, and so I spoke," we too believe, and so we speak, knowing that he who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and bring us with you into his presence. For it is all for your sake, so that as grace extends to more and more people it may increase thanksgiving, to the glory of God.

Letra e Dytë e Apostull Pavlit drejtuar Korinthianëve 4:6-15

Sepse Perëndia që tha të ndriçojë dritë nga errësira, është ai që ndriçoi në zemrat tona për të dhënë ndriçimin e njohjes së lavdisë së Perëndisë në personin e Jisu Krishtit. Edhe kemi këtë thesar në enë balte, që të jetë teprimi i fuqisë nga Perëndia dhe jo nga ne. Jemi në çdo gjë të shtrënguar, po jo të dërrmuar; të ngatërruar, po jo të dëshpëruar; të përndjekur, po jo të braktisur; të vënë poshtë, po jo të humbur, duke rrethsjellë gjithmonë në trup vdekjen e Zotit Jisu, që edhe jeta e Jisuit të shfaqet në trupin tonë. Sepse ne që rrojmë, gjithnjë jepemi në vdekje për Krishtin, që edhe jeta e Jisuit të shfaqet në trupin tonë të vdekshëm. Kështu vdekja vepron në ne, edhe jeta në ju. Edhe duke pasur po atë frymë besimi, sipas Shkrimit "Besova, prandaj fola", edhe ne besojmë, prandaj edhe flasim, duke ditur se ai që ngjalli Zotin Jisu do të na ngjallë edhe ne me anë të Jisuit, edhe do të na nxjerrë përpara tij bashkë me ju. Sepse të gjitha janë për ju, që hiri, duke tepruar për falënderimin e më të shumtëve, të projë në lavdinë e Perëndisë.

2-е Коринфянам 4:6-15

потому что Бог, повелевший из тьмы воссиять свету, озарил наши сердца, дабы просветить [нас] познанием славы Божией в лице Иисуса Христа. Но сокровище сие мы носим в глиняных сосудах, чтобы преизбыточная сила была [приписываема] Богу, а не нам. Мы отовсюду притесняемы, но не стеснены; мы в отчаянных обстоятельствах, но не отчаиваемся; мы гонимы, но не оставлены; низлагаемы, но не погибаем. Всегда носим в теле мертвость Господа Иисуса, чтобы и жизнь Иисусова открылась в теле нашем. Ибо мы живые непрестанно предаемся на смерть ради Иисуса, чтобы и жизнь Иисусова открылась в смертной плоти нашей, так что смерть действует в нас, а жизнь в вас. Но, имея тот же дух веры, как написано: я веровал и потому говорил, и мы веруем, потому и говорим, зная, что Воскресивший Господа Иисуса воскресит через Иисуса и нас и поставит перед [Собою] с вами. Ибо всё для вас, дабы обилие благодати тем большую во многих произвело благодарность во славу Божию.

Tone 2

Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia!

V. May the Lord hear thee in the day of trouble! May the name of the God of Jacob protect thee! *(Ps. 19:1)*

V. Save the King, O Lord, and hear us on the day we call! *(Ps. 19:9)*

Tone 8

V. Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace, according to Thy word, for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation! *(Luke 2:29)*

The Gospel Reading

The Gospel According to Matthew 22:35-46

At that time, a lawyer came up to Jesus and asked him a question, to test him. "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?" And he said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it, You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the law and the prophets." Now while the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them a question, saying, "What do you think of the Christ? Whose son is he?" They said to him, "The son of David." He said to them, "How is it then that David, inspired by the Spirit, calls him Lord, saying, 'The Lord said to my Lord, Sit at my right hand, till I put your enemies under your feet'? If David thus calls him Lord, how is he his son?" And no one was able to answer him a word, nor from that day did anyone dare to ask him any more questions.

Ungjilli Sipas Matheut 22:35-46

Edhe një mësues ligji nga ata, e pyeti duke e ngacmuar atë, e duke thënë: Mësues, cili urdhërim është më i madhi në ligj? Edhe Jisui i tha atij: "Të duash Zotin Perëndinë tënd me gjithë zemrën tënde, dhe me gjithë shpirtin tënd dhe me gjithë mendjen tënde". Ky është urdhërimi i parë dhe i madh. Edhe i dyti i ngjashëm me të është: "Të duash të afërmin tënd si veten tënde". Gjithë ligji dhe profetët varen nga këto dy urdhërime. Edhe ndërsa ishin mbledhur Farisenjtë, Jisui i pyeti, duke thënë: Ç'mendoni ju për Krishtin? I biri i kujt është? I thonë: I Davidit. U thotë atyre: Si pra Davidi në Frymë e quan atë Zot, duke thënë: "I tha Zoti Zotit tim: Rri në të djathtën time deri sa të vë armiqtë e tu nënkëmbëse të këmbëve të tua"? Në qoftë pra se Davidi e quan Zot, si është i biri i atij? Edhe asnjë nuk mundej t'i përgjigjej ndonjë fjalë; as nuk guxoi ndonjë që atë ditë ta pyesë më.

От Матфея 22:35-46

И один из них, законник, искушая Его, спросил, говоря: Учитель! какая наибольшая заповедь в законе? Иисус сказал ему: возлюби Господа Бога твоего всем сердцем твоим и всею душею твоею и всем разумением твоим: сия есть первая и наибольшая заповедь; вторая же подобная ей: возлюби ближнего твоего, как самого себя; на сих двух заповедях утверждается весь закон и пророки. Когда же собрались фарисеи, Иисус спросил их: что вы думаете о Христе? чей Он сын? Говорят Ему: Давидов. Говорит им: как же Давид, по вдохновению, называет Его Господом, когда говорит: сказал Господь Господу моему: седи одесную Меня, доколе положу врагов Твоих в подножие ног Твоих? Итак, если Давид называет Его Господом, как же Он сын ему? И никто не мог отвечать Ему ни слова; и с того дня никто уже не смел спрашивать Его.

(Instead of "It is truly meet...", we sing:)

Tone 3

*O Virgin Theotokos, hope of all Christians,
protect, preserve, and save those who hope in thee!*

*In the shadow and letter of the Law,
let us the faithful discern a figure:
every male [child] that opens the womb
is holy to God.*

*Therefore we magnify the firstborn Word of the Father Who has no beginning,
the Son firstborn of a Mother who had not known man.*

Communion Hymn

Praise the Lord from the heavens, praise Him in the highest! *(Ps. 148:1)*
I will receive the cup of salvation and call on the Name of the Lord. *(Ps. 115:4)*
Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia!

PRAYERS	Birthdays, Names-days, & Anniversaries	SCRIPTURE THIS WEEK
<i>For Those Who Have Fallen Asleep</i>		
<p>Newly Departed Benjamin Newly Departed Olvian, Newly Departed William, Newly Departed Gregory, Newly Departed Alexander,</p> <p><i>[To be inserted after the petition for the departed]</i> Again we pray for those who have lost their lives because of conflicts in Ukraine, Armenia, and the Middle East: that the Lord our God may look upon them with mercy, and give them rest where there is neither sickness, or sorrow, but life everlasting.</p>	<p><i>February 4 – 10</i> Roland Dani (B) Ralph John (B) Bronya Dellermann (B)</p> <p><u>Seven-Day Vigil Candles</u> Llukan Dylgjeri – health</p> <p>Seven-Day Vigil Candles are used for the Eternal Light that hangs above the Royal Doors and are often placed in front of the icons of Christ or the Birth-giver of God. If you would like to donate a Seven-Day Vigil Candle, Please include the name or names of those for whom the candle is donated, and we will place them in this section for special prayers.</p>	<p><u>Church Lectionary</u></p> <p><i>Today</i> II Corinthians 4:6-15 Matthew 22:35-46</p> <p><i>Monday</i> Hebrews 11:17-31 Mark 9:42-50; 10:1</p> <p><i>Tuesday</i> Hebrews 7:26-28;8:1-2 John 10:9-16</p>
<i>For Those Who Are Sick And Home-bound</i>		
<p>Virginia, Denise, Marie, James, Alexandra, Andrew, Christina, Louise, Porter, Alvin, Tracy, Kathy, Andrew, Maria, Helen, John, Nina, Sophia, Spresha, Kristin, Niko, Spiro, Angjeliki, Melod, Olgay, Ruth, Terry, Naomi, Annette, Tatiana, Lester Jr., Natalia, Otari, Lasha, Fr. Nikolas, Llukan, Marina, Sophia, Fr. Maxwell, Donna, Christina, Anastasia, Mary, Martin, Elena, Tatiana, Lauren, Tracy, Anita, Sandi, Anibal,</p>		<p><i>Wednesday</i> James 1:1-18 Mark 10:11-16</p> <p><i>Thursday</i> Ephesians 2:4-10 Matthew 10:16-22</p>
<i>Prayers In General</i>		
<p>The community of Ss. Peter & Paul Miami, Fr. Dennis and his family, Fr. Ioan, Christian, Michael, Erica, Kaida, DuDash family, Michael, Robert, Ally, Steve, Jake and Amanda and their children, Katherine, Ron, Anthony, Volodymyr, Nick, Michael, Rafael, Bob, Barbara, Sandra, Enoch, John, Victoria, Melenie, Grace, Michael, Barbara, Giorgi, Molly, Jim, Chloe, Marsha, Ann, Lilly, Stephen, Gela, Gabriel Joseph, Lombrino, Kondakciu, Diana, Newly-illuminated Isabella</p> <p><i>[To be inserted after the petition for the living]</i> Again we pray for mercy, life, peace, health, salvation, for those who are suffering, wounded, grieving, or displaced because of the conflicts in Ukraine, Armenia, and the Middle East.</p> <p><i>[Petitions at Augmented Litany]</i> Again we pray for a cessation of the hostilities in Ukraine, Armenia, and the Middle East, and that reconciliation and peace will flourish in these places, we pray thee, hearken and have mercy.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">COFFEE HOUR</p> <p><u>February</u> 04 Icon Pledge 11 Souper-Bowl Sunday 18 Hank & Mary 25</p> <p>Coffee Hour is a wonderful chance for us to get together to break bread and spend time with each other, to celebrate those whom we have held memorials for, and to come together as the family of God outside of worship. To sign up, to host a coffee hour, contact Fr. Nicholas or Donna Bacon.</p>	<p><i>Friday</i> James 2:1-13 Mark 10:24-32</p> <p><i>Saturday</i> II Timothy 2:1-10 John 15:17-27; 16:1-2</p> <p><u>Reading the Bible in a Year</u></p> <p>Feb 04: Numbers 17-20 Feb 05: Numbers 21-24 Feb 06: Numbers 25-28 Feb 07: Numbers 29-32 Feb 08: Numbers 33-36 Feb 09: Deuteronomy 1-4 Feb 10: Deuteronomy 4-8</p>

THE MEANING AND SIGNIFICANCE OF FASTING

On Fasting and Prayer. Part 2

St. Justin (Polyansky) of Ufa and Menzelinsk

Having established a general concept of fasting, having briefly revealed its meaning and significance for us, now, beloveds, let us begin to uncover its essence.

In accordance with our twofold being—bodily and spiritual—the Church has commanded a twofold fast: bodily and spiritual. Let us first discuss the bodily fast.

What is bodily fasting?

Bodily fasting is the measured consumption of food and drink, and fasting food in particular. The Church typikon clearly lays out both the time of consumption and quality of fasting food. And how wisely and lovingly all this is done! Sometimes, when necessary, no food is prescribed at all; sometimes the most meager food is indicated—only bread with salt and water; sometimes fruits and vegetables are provided for; sometimes a type of broth; sometimes just one dish is appointed for a meal, sometimes two; sometimes wine is permitted, and fish on major feasts as well. Everything is strictly calculated, with the aim of weakening the passionate movements of the flesh that are aroused by abundant and sweet eating; but not so as to completely weaken our bodily nature, but, on the contrary, to make it light, strong, and fully capable of obeying the movements of the spirit and energetically fulfilling its demands. Anyone who has decided to fast according to the precepts of the Church typikon regarding the consumption of food knows from experience all the beneficence and salutariness of the appointed xerography.¹ Countless hosts of saints who shone forth in fasting have experienced this. They all strictly adhered to the once-and-for-all prescribed rules and order in the quantity and quality of food. And what then? They were always healthy; they almost never needed treatment; and if they did need it sometime, they were treated by fasting and abstinence; that's why they lived for a hundred years, performing incredible feats.

So, beloveds, fasting consists in consuming food according to the determination of the Church regarding its quantity, time, and especially quality. During the fast, the faithful should not consume food before noon, should only consume fasting food, and moreover, in moderation; they should abstain not only from all drinks that inflame the blood or gratify the taste, but also from all amusements, games, pleasures, and idle gatherings; in general, everything that arouses sensuality.

It is the duty of every son of the Orthodox Church to preserve the fasts as a Divine institution and as an action or means of worshipping God. The Lord Himself commands: Sanctify a fast (Joel 1:14, 2:15); turn ye even to Me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning (Joel 2:12). For the violation of fasts, the wrath of God befalls families, nations, and kingdoms with great calamities (Ps. 77:29-30, Lk. 21:34). Failing to observe the fasts, disrespecting the laws of the Church, a man can't be a true son of the Church. Can it be expected that a son of the Orthodox Church who is disobedient in small, external matters should maintain obedience in more important obligations?







Fasting is a necessary means for success in the spiritual life and for attaining salvation; for fasting—depriving the flesh of excessive food and drink—weakens the force of sensual drives. From this it can be seen that fasting has diverse benefits: a) Fasting quickly and clearly shows a man that little is needed for his life, and his health depends not on refined, but on simple food and drink; b) fasting very soon reveals the passions and vices reigning in a man, which he has clung to with his heart, and which his flesh loves most of all; c) fasting makes us capable of prayer and reflection upon God and the Divine. “Whoever fasts prays with a good spirit,” says St. John Chrysostom. In general, fasting is a very powerful means of preparation for all great and saving deeds. This is deeply felt by all prudent and God-loving people, always and everywhere. All the saints very strictly fasted and unanimously advised others to fast.

My beloved listeners! Having understood the essence and grasped the meaning and significance of fasting, let us, of course, as obedient sons of the Church, no longer oppose the Church's teaching on fasting, but resolve to observe all the fasts prescribed by the holy Church, according to its typikon. But we must prepare ourselves for fasting gradually: One cannot become a faster all at once. Amen.

St. Justin (Polyansky) of Ufa and Menzelinsk
Translation by Jesse Dominick
Azbyka.ru
12/4/2023

1 Completely fasting until sunset, and abstaining from meat, alcohol, and water for the one meal consumed after sunset.—Trans.

<https://orthochristian.com/157623.html>

February Events	
<p>February 04 – 10:00am Divine Liturgy <i>Icon Pledge</i> 07 – 12:00pm 6th Hour 7:15pm Bible Study via GoogleMeets 09 – 6:00pm Fun Night 11 – 10:00am Divine Liturgy <i>Souper-Bowl Sunday</i> 14 – 12:00pm 6th Hour 7:15pm Bible Study via GoogleMeets 18 – 10:00am Divine Liturgy 21 – 12:00pm 6th Hour 7:15pm Bible Study via GoogleMeets 25 – 10:00am Divine Liturgy 28 – 12:00pm 6th Hour 7:15pm Bible Study via GoogleMeets</p> <p>Can't join us in person? We stream our services on our YouTube Channel: https://www.youtube.com/@sspeterpaulorthodoxchurcho1810</p> <p>Want to donate by Venmo? St Peter St Paul Alb Orth Ch James Schaeffer</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"> •  • </p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>When you throw a nail into a fire, it gets hot and starts to glow like fire. In the same way you, when you listen to divine teachings and live accordingly, will become like God.</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>-St. Symeon of Daibabe</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"> •  • </p>

Venerable Isidore of Pelusium

Saint Isidore of Pelusium lived during the fourth-fifth centuries. He was a native of Alexandria, and was raised among pious Christians. He was a relative of Theophilus, Archbishop of Alexandria, and of his successor, Saint Cyril (January 18). While still a youth he quit the world and withdrew to Egypt to Mount Pelusium, which became the site of his monastic efforts.

Saint Isidore's spiritual wisdom and strict asceticism, combined with his broad learning and innate knowledge of the human soul, enabled him to win the respect and love of his fellow monks in a short time. They chose him as their head and had him ordained a priest (the earliest sources for his life, however, say nothing of him being an igumen).

Following the example of Saint John Chrysostom, whom he had managed to see and hear during a trip to Constantinople, Saint Isidore devoted himself primarily to Christian preaching, that "practical wisdom"



which, in his own words, is both “the foundation of the edifice and the edifice itself”, while logic is “its embellishment, and contemplation its crown”.

He was a teacher and a willingly provided counsel for anyone who turned to him for spiritual encouragement, whether it was a simple man, a dignitary, a bishop, the Patriarch of Alexandria, or even the emperor. He left behind about 10,000 letters, of which 2,090 have survived. A large portion of these letters reveal profound theological thought and contain morally edifying interpretations of Holy Scripture. Saint Photius (February 6) calls Isidore a model of priestly and ascetical life, and also a master of style.

Saint Isidore’s love for Saint John Chrysostom resulted in his support of Saint John when he was persecuted by the empress Eudoxia and Archbishop Theophilus. After the death of Saint John, Saint Isidore persuaded Theophilus’ successor Saint Cyril to inscribe the name of Saint John Chrysostom into the Church diptychs as a confessor.

Through the initiative of Saint Isidore the Third Ecumenical Council was convened at Ephesus (431), at which the false teaching of Nestorius concerning the person of Jesus Christ was condemned.

Saint Isidore lived into old age and died around the year 436. The Church historian Evagrius (sixth century) writes of Saint Isidore, “his life seemed to everyone the life of an angel upon the earth.” Another historian, Nikēphoros Callistus (ninth century), praises Saint Isidore thus: “He was a vital and inspired pillar of monastic rules and divine vision, and as such he presented a very lofty image of most fervent example and spiritual teaching.”



God is not a Prosecutor, but a Physician

The Scriptures, the works of the Early Church Fathers, and the liturgical texts of the Church, all attest to the fact that the Ancient Church did not teach that Christ’s Incarnation was intended to be a propitiation of divine righteousness. Rather, Christ came as a Physician intent on bringing healing to fallen mankind. Christ’s Incarnation brought the whole of human nature together, with His Divine Nature, for a cure. His spiritual medicine brings healing, removes the stain of sin that had introduced death to the cosmos, and makes everything whole.

This condescension of God, taking on our human flesh, and joining His Divinity to us, can not be seen in legalistic terms, but must be seen from a medical perspective. We are ill. Our sin is not about law, but about illness. In our fallen state, we’ve departed from communion with God, and Christ’s death upon the cross was accomplished, not because the Father demanded blood, but because He desires to heal us, and restore life to His creatures who’ve inherited death from our fallen forefather, Adam. That Christ assumed our human nature, made possible the cure.

The Lord Jesus Christ established His Church as a hospital of the soul, and it is within Her walls that we are given the medicine to bring about the healing we so need. God does not desire suffering, nor our blood, but only that we be restored to the image He intended for us. This loving Father is not our prosecutor, but our physician.

With love in Christ,
Abbot Tryphon

ICON PLEDGE SUNDAY	SOUPER-BOWL SUNDAY
<p>Our parish celebrates a stewardship tradition that comes from Albania: the “icon auction” or “Konizmat” beginning in January.</p> <p>The practice stems from a time when Albania and the Orthodox Church were under Ottoman (Turkish) suzerainty (1468-1912). Sometime in the period between the 17th and 19th century the local pasha came up with a particularly oppressive means to tax the local parish. When parishes could not (or would not) pay the yearly tax, the pasha, or his minions, took whatever items were in the church and held them for ransom from the faithful. Items ranged from the sacred vessels to the icons. The practice was carried over into the United States as a means of challenging the faithful by the words of the Gospel: “Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.”</p> <p>As in many Albanian-American Orthodox communities, our practice is to submit “bids” with the highest bid gets to take the item home and keep it there until the following year.</p> <p>The Icon Pledge will be held on February 4th Let Father Nicholas or Jim Schaeffer know if there is an icon that you would like added to the list to bid on. <u>Please make sure that all pledged icons from last year have been returned!</u></p>	<p><u>Together we can tackle hunger.</u> <i>Sunday, February 11, 2024</i></p> <p>Help feed the hungry by collecting nonperishables for a local food bank. Together we can turn the biggest weekend in football into a super day of giving!</p> <p><i>Learn more at iocc.org/souperbowl</i></p> <hr/> <p>Souper Bowl Sunday is Feb. 11th!</p> <p>Plan to bring a pot of your best soup and a hearty appetite and take part in our annual Souper Bowl Charity fund raiser.</p> <p>Try a plethora of delicious soups here at coffee hour!</p> <p>Buy some more of your favorites to take home!</p> <p>Donate to a worthy cause!</p>

A Grateful Heart is Fertile Ground

When we strive to interact with members of our family, our friends, our coworkers, and all others, with respect, humility, and dignity, we lay the groundwork for the abundance of Grace needed to quicken our heart for the things of God.

When you open your heart to others, with gratitude, the path is prepared for a relationship with Jesus Christ, and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit will fill you with the power to live a life that is transformed by God’s Grace. You will be filled with heartfelt gratitude for all God’s gifts, and inner peace will be yours. The preparation for sowing the seeds of the love of God begins with responsive gratefulness. The Apostle Paul writes, “Remember, it is not you that holds up the root, but the root that holds you up (Rom. 11:18).” Any relationship with God, must begin with a grateful heart, and is cultivated by kindness, and goodwill towards others. When you are grateful you respond toward God and others by enacting other virtues.

The constant and cultivated feeling of deep appreciation and heartfelt gratitude for others quickens the soul to feel the inner need to freely and thankfully respond to God’s invitation to commune with Him. The soil is prepared for the planting of seeds that allow us to respond to God’s grace, for a grateful heart is fertile ground for the things of God.