

# Saints Peter and Paul Orthodox Church

Albanian Archdiocese - OCA

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

**SUNDAY, DECEMBER 3**  
**26th Sunday after Pentecost**  
**Prophet Zephaniah**

**Tone 1**  
**Troparion**  
**(Resurrection)**

*When the stone had been sealed by the Jews,  
while the soldiers were guarding Thy most pure body,  
Thou didst rise on the third day, O Savior,  
granting life to the world.  
The powers of heaven therefore cried to Thee, O Giver  
of Life:  
“Glory to Thy Resurrection, O Christ!  
Glory to Thy Kingdom!  
Glory to Thy dispensation, O Thou Who lovest  
mankind!”*

**Tone 2**  
**Troparion**  
**(Prophet Zephaniah)**

*We celebrate the memory  
of Thy prophet Zephaniah, O Lord;  
through him we beseech Thee:  
“Save our souls!”*

**Tone 1**  
**Kontakion**  
**(Resurrection)**

*As God, Thou didst rise from the tomb in glory,  
raising the world with Thyself.  
Human nature praises Thee as God, for death has  
vanished.  
Adam exults, O Master!  
Eve rejoices, for she is freed from bondage and  
cries to Thee:  
“Thou art the Giver of Resurrection to all, O Christ!”*

**Tone 4**  
**Kontakion**  
**(Prophet Zephaniah)**

*Thou hast been revealed by the Spirit of God to be  
brilliant, O Prophet Zephaniah,  
for thou didst proclaim the coming of God:  
“Rejoice greatly, O Daughter of Zion!  
Proclaim Him, O Jerusalem!  
Behold, your King is coming to save mankind!”*

**Prokeimenon**

**Tone 1 (Resurrection)**

Let Thy mercy, O Lord, be upon us / as we have set our hope on Thee! (Ps. 32:22)  
V. Rejoice in the Lord, O you righteous! Praise befits the just! (Ps. 32:1)

## The Epistle Reading

### **Ephesians 5:9-19**

(for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth), finding out what is acceptable to the Lord. And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them. For it is shameful even to speak of those things which are done by them in secret. But all things that are exposed are made manifest by the light, for whatever makes manifest is light. Therefore He says: "Awake, you who sleep, arise from the dead, and Christ will give you light." See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is. And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord,

### **Efesianeve 5:9-19**

sepse fryti i Frymës është në çdo mirësi, e drejtësi, e të vërtetë; duke provuar ç'është e pëlqyeshme për Zotin. Edhe mos u shoqëroni në punët e pafrytshme të errësirës, por më tepër t'i qortoni. Sepse ato që bëhen fshehurazi nga ata, është turp edhe të thuhet. Po gjithë sa qortohen nga drita bëhen të dukshme; sepse çdo gjë që bëhet e dukshme është dritë. Prandaj thotë: Ngrihu ti që fle, edhe ngjallu prej së vdekurish, edhe Krishti do të të ndriçojë. Shikoni pra si të ecni me kujdes; jo si të marrë, po si të urtë, duke shfrytëzuar kohën, sepse ditët janë të këqija. Prandaj mos u bëni të pamend, po nga ata që kuptojnë ç'është dëshira e Zotit. Edhe mos u dehni me verë, në të cilën ka plangprishje; por mbushuni me Frymë të Shenjtë, duke folur midis jush me psalme e me himne dhe me këngë shpirtërore, duke i kënduar e duke i psalur Zotit me zemrën tuaj,

### **К Ефесянам 5:9-19**

потому что плод Духа состоит во всякой благодати, праведности и истине. Испытывайте, что благоугодно Богу, и не участвуйте в бесплодных делах тьмы, но и обличайте. Ибо о том, что они делают тайно, стыдно и говорить. Все же обнаруживаемое делается явным от света, ибо все, делающееся явным, свет есть. Посему сказано: 'встань, спящий, и воскресни из мертвых, и осветит тебя Христос'. Итак, смотрите, поступайте осторожно, не как неразумные, но как мудрые, дорожа временем, потому что дни лукавы. Итак, не будьте нерассудительны, но познавайте, что есть воля Божия. И не упивайтесь вином, от которого бывает распутство; но исполняйтесь Духом, назидая самих себя псалмами и славословиями и песнопениями духовными, поя и воспевая в сердцах ваших Господу,

### **Tone 1**

Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia!

V. God gives vengeance unto me, and subdues people under me. *(Ps. 17:48)*

V. He magnifies the salvation of the King and deals mercifully with David, His anointed, and his seed forever. *(Ps. 17:51)*

## **Prophet Zephaniah**

Zephaniah was the son of Cushi, a native of Mount Sarabatha, from the tribe of Simeon. He lived and prophesied in the seventh century before Christ, at the time of Josiah the pious king of Judah (641-610 B.C.). Zephaniah was also a contemporary of the Prophets Jeremiah and Habakkuk. Having great humility and a pure mind raised to God, he was found worthy of the grace of God to discern the future.

Under the two preceding kings of Judah, Amon and Manasseh, the cult of other deities (especially Baal and Astarte) had developed in the Holy City of Jerusalem, bringing with it elements of alien culture and morals. Josiah, a dedicated reformer, wished to put an end to perceived misuse of the holy places. One of the most zealous champions and advisers of this reform was Zephaniah, and his writing, which consists of only three chapters, remains one of the most important documents for the understanding of the era of Josiah.

The prophet spoke boldly against the religious and moral corruption, when, in view of the idolatry which had penetrated even into the sanctuary, he warned that God would "destroy out of this place the remnant of Baal, and the names of the ... priests" (Zeph. 1:4), and pleaded for a return to the simplicity of their fathers instead of the luxurious foreign clothing which was worn especially in aristocratic circles (1:8). He saw Jerusalem as a filthy and polluted and oppressing city. Her princes within her

## ✠ The Gospel Reading ✠

### **Luke 18:18-27**

Now a certain ruler asked Him, saying, "Good Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" So Jesus said to him, "Why do you call Me good? No one is good but One, that is, God. You know the commandments: 'Do not commit adultery,' 'Do not murder,' 'Do not steal,' 'Do not bear false witness,' 'Honor your father and your mother.'" And he said, "All these things I have kept from my youth." So when Jesus heard these things, He said to him, "You still lack one thing. Sell all that you have and distribute to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me." But when he heard this, he became very sorrowful, for he was very rich. And when Jesus saw that he became very sorrowful, He said, "How hard it is for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God! For it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God." And those who heard it said, "Who then can be saved?" But He said, "The things which are impossible with men are possible with God."

### **Llukait 18:18-27**

Edhe një i parë e pyeti, duke thënë: Mësues i mirë, ç'të bëj që të trashëgoj jetë të përjetshme? Edhe Jisui i tha: Ç'më thua i mirë? Asnjë nuk është i mirë, përveçse një, Perëndia. Ti i di urdhërimet: "Mos shkel kurorën. Mos vrit. Mos vidh. Mos jep dëshmi të rreme. Ndero atin tënd dhe nënën tënde". Edhe ai tha: Të gjitha këto i kam ruajtur që në rininë time. Edhe Jisui, kur dëgjoi këto, i tha: Një gjë të mungon ende, shit gjithë ç'ke dhe ndajua të varfërve, edhe do të kesh thesar në qiell; edhe eja, e ndiqmë pas. Por ai, kur dëgjoi këto, u hidhërua; sepse ishte fort i pasur. Edhe Jisui, kur pa se u hidhërua, tha: Sa me vështirësi do të hyjnë në mbretërinë e Perëndisë ata që kanë para! Sepse më lehtë është të hyjë gamilja nëpër vrimën e gjilpërës, se një i pasur të hyjë në mbretërinë e Perëndisë. Edhe ata që dëgjuan thanë: E kush mund të shpëtojë? Edhe ai tha: Të pamundurat për njerëzit janë të mundura për Perëndinë.

### **От Луки 18:18-27**

И спросил Его некто из начальствующих: Учитель благий! что мне делать, чтобы наследовать жизнь вечную? Иисус сказал ему: что ты называешь Меня благим? никто не благ, как только один Бог; знаешь заповеди: не прелюбодействуй, не убивай, не кради, не лжесвидетельствуй, почитай отца твоего и мать твою. Он же сказал: все это сохранил я от юности моей. Услышав это, Иисус сказал ему: еще одного недостает тебе: все, что имеешь, продай и раздай нищим, и будешь иметь сокровище на небесах, и приходи, следуй за Мною. Он же, услышав сие, опечалился, потому что был очень богат. Иисус, видя, что он опечалился, сказал: как трудно имеющим богатство войти в Царствие Божие! ибо удобнее верблюду пройти сквозь игольные уши, нежели богатому войти в Царствие Божие. Слышавшие сие сказали: кто же может спастись? Но Он сказал: невозможное человекам возможно Богу.

### **Communion Hymn**

Praise the Lord from the heavens, praise Him in the highest! (*Ps. 148:1*)  
Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia!

*Continued from page 2*

were roaring lions; her judges were evening wolves; her prophets were treacherous persons, her priests polluted the sanctuary, doing violence to the Law (Zeph. 3:1-4). Zephaniah prophesied the day of the wrath of God and the punishment of Gaza, Ashkalon, Ashdod, Ekron, Nineveh, Jerusalem and Egypt.

Foreseeing the advent of the Messiah, he enthusiastically exclaimed: "Sing, O daughter of Zion; shout, O Israel; be glad and rejoice with all your heart, O daughter of Jerusalem" (Zeph. 3:14). Further he proclaimed that the gentiles will become the people of God when the Messiah comes, and that the Messiah will be the judge of all rational creatures, giving to all according to their works.

This seer of mysteries entered into rest at his birthplace to await the General Resurrection and his reward from God. His name is commonly transliterated Sophonias in Bibles translated from the Latin Vulgate or Septuagint. The name might mean "Yahweh has concealed", "[he whom] Yahweh has hidden", or "Yahweh lies in wait." He is numbered among the so-called Minor Prophets.

PRAYERS	Birthdays, Names-days, & Anniversaries	SCRIPTURE THIS WEEK
<i>For Those Who Have Fallen Asleep</i>		<b>Church Lectionary</b>
<p>Newly Departed Miriam, Newly Departed Prifteresha Elisabeth Bouteneff, Alice, Olga</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>December 3 – 9 Hope Vrato (B) Barbara (N) Fr. Nicholas (N) Nick Schaeffer (N) Nick Desloges (N) Nico Chocheli (N) Nikollaq Lako (N)</p> <p><b>Seven-Day Vigil Candles</b></p> <p>Llukan Dylgjeri – health Michael Mogilevich - health</p>	<p><u>Today</u> Ephesians 5:9-19 Luke 18:18-27</p> <p><u>Monday</u> Hebrews 13:7-16 Luke 12:32-40 1 Timothy 5:1-10 Luke 20:27-44</p>
<i>For Those Who Are Sick And Home-bound</i>		<u>Tuesday</u>
<p>Virginia, Denise, Olvian, 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, Barbara, Anastasia</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>Galatians 5:22-6:2 Matthew 11:27-30 1 Timothy 5:11-21 Luke 21:12-19</p>
<i>Prayers In General</i>		<u>Wednesday</u>
<p>The community of Ss. Peter &amp; 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, Sophia, Michael, Rafael, Bob, Barbara, Sandra, Enoch, John, Victoria, Melenie, Grace, Michael, Barbara, Giorgi, Molly, Jim, Chloe, Marsha, Ann, Lilly, Stephen, Gela</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;"><b>COFFEE HOUR</b></p> <p><b>December</b> 03 10 – Penny Party 17 24</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>Hebrews 13:17-21 Luke 6:17-23 1 Timothy 5:22-6:11 Luke 21:5-7, 10-11, 20-24</p> <p><u>Thursday</u> 1 Timothy 6:17-21 Luke 21:28-33</p> <p><u>Friday</u> 2 Timothy 1:1-2, 8-18 Luke 21:37-22:8</p> <p><u>Saturday</u> Galatians 4:22-31 Luke 8:16-21 Galatians 5:22-6:2 Luke 13:18-29</p> <p><b>Reading the Bible in a Year</b></p> <p>Dec 03: Galatians 4-6 Dec 04: Ephesians 1-3 Dec 05: Ephesians 4-6 Dec 06: Philippians Dec 07: Colossians Dec 08: 1 Thessalonians Dec 09: 2 Thessalonians</p>

## What Belongs to Caesar & What Belongs to God

BY FR. BARNABAS POWELL



We have succumbed to such a consumerist mindset that the Pavlovian trigger of “sale” actually has us queuing up outside the “box” retailers to wait in the cold to get a slip of paper that permits us to purchase a product at a particular price so we will “have” the product. One begins to wonder if we “have” the product, or does the “product” have us? Especially at this time of year, we are tempted to confuse generosity with consumerism.

On the other hand, this is also an icon of a system that has brought unprecedented wealth and economic achievement into the world. Our society has created a

place where even the poor among us are considered “wealthy” by the vast majority of the population on the earth. We have so banished hunger that the main problem in our society is obesity. We are a wealthy society, at least in terms of “products.” It all depends on how you define “wealth.” If it means having and getting “stuff” then we are the wealthiest society in the history of humanity.

But is that wealth? Is the lack of hunger actual nutrition? Is the accumulation of “stuff” real prosperity?

Look at our lesson today in Luke 20:19-26:

*At that time, the scribes and the chief priests tried to lay hands on him at that very hour, but they feared the people; for they perceived that he had told this parable against them. So they watched him, and sent spies, who pretended to be sincere, that they might take hold of what he said, so as to deliver him up to the authority and jurisdiction of the governor. They asked him, “Teacher, we know that you speak and teach rightly, and show no partiality, but truly teach the way of God. Is it lawful for us to give tribute to Caesar, or not?” But he perceived their craftiness, and said to them, “Show me a coin. Whose likeness and inscription has it?” They said, “Caesar’s.” He said to them, “Then render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s.” And they were not able in the presence of the people to catch him by what he said; but marveling at his answer they were silent.*

Jesus is confronted with the duplicitous motives of those around Him trying to trap Him so they can destroy Him. By the way, that is the reality of anyone who leads or is called to lead. There will always be those around you whose motives are at least suspect. It’s the reason the scripture declares that “Jesus did not commit Himself to them, because He knew all men, and had no need that anyone should testify of man, for He knew what was in man.” They insist that we learn about ourselves when we take the time to examine our motivations and our true desires reaps profound spiritual maturity IF we are willing to look that deeply into our souls.

Notice Jesus sidesteps their flattery. Flattery can be a clue to challenged motives. Then the Lord uses wisdom, not shrewdness, to overcome their hidden motives. “Give to Caesar what belongs to Caesar.” These spies hoped to catch Jesus in a trap by having Him say that Caesar’s secular tax was evil. That way, they could report Him to the government as a rebel leader and then Rome would arrest Him. Or, they could get the Lord to say the tax was good and then turn the Jewish people against Him because the people hated being under an occupying army and foreign government. They thought, in their arrogance, that they had tricked the Lord into either siding with the Roman occupiers OR saying something they



could use to tell the Romans that this guy was a subversive.

But the Lord sidestepped their tricks with wisdom. After all, true freedom is an internal reality. If you are waiting for external answers to your internal struggles, you will always be a slave to your surroundings. Internal freedom comes from internal spiritual discipline. And freedom from within can never be taken from you, no matter what your external circumstances. It is the hard work of serious self-knowledge that leads you to a true repentance that changes your perspective on possessions and on the false sense of security that you think material wealth might provide. This changed perspective sets you free to become a truly generous person like your Creator!

St. Nahum, the Prophet ministered to the people of Israel 721 years before Christ. This prophet warned the 10 Northern Tribes that had separated from the 2 Southern Tribes. that they were becoming entirely; too friendly with the pagan powers around them. Of course, the 10 Tribes justified their actions by saying “we are just trying to stay on friendly terms with these powers near us so they won’t conquer us.” The sad truth is their plan of compromise didn’t work and soon the 10 Tribes of the Northern kingdom of Israel will be destroyed and the people scattered to the wind to the point they will cease to exist and their descendants will be known as compromisers and treated as “half-breeds” by the time the Lord Jesus is born. They mistook “safety” and “prosperity” as the highest good, and they fell into idolatry and spiritual ruin.

Today, instead of falling prey to reducing your real self to merely a “consumer” (that sounds inhuman), why not stop during this tempting time of year? Ask your family to choose a charity to add to your giving list this year. And then commit a portion of the money you were going to spend on “stuff” that wears out or comes with a “limited warranty” and put that amount into hungry mouths, suffering people, and needy folks in your community. Why not add generosity and charity to your frenzied season and watch as this wisdom undoes the hold that “things” have on us? After all, that’s part of Living a Normal Orthodox life!

<https://faithencouraged.org/what-belongs-to-cesar-what-belongs-to-god/>

**“Love thy God with all your heart, mind...”**  
**and secondly, “Love thy neighbor...”**

We live in a world bombarded with thousands of messages, some subtle and some not-so-subtle, of merchandising that impact the way we interact with others, and the way we relate to God. Much of what we glean from these messages is narcissistic in nature, estranging us from one another. We become so self absorbed that we fail to live authentically as Christians, being peace-makers, working towards justice, failing to forgive those who’ve wronged us, and not being compassionate towards those in need of mercy and charity. “Those who hear the word ought to give proof of the work of the word in their own souls” (St. Macarius the Great).

If we wear a cross around our neck, make the sign of the cross in perfect order, keep the fast periods, but have not the love of the poor we have gained nothing. Christ Himself told us that we can not love God Whom we’ve not seen, if we do not love our neighbor. If we do not give alms to the poor and speak out for human justice, we will have gained nothing. If we do not treat everyone with respect and love, and show mercy to all, we have not Christ in us.

We must put on Christ with the rising of the sun, and with it going down. Christ must be in every word we speak and in every action of our heart. He must reign supreme in our lives, that all see Christ in us, just as we must see Christ in every person with whom we come in contact. “I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me” (Galatians 2:20).

Love in Christ,  
Abbot Tryphon

<https://abbottryphon.com/the-two-great-commandments-6/>

## December Events

### December

03 – 10:00am Divine Liturgy

#### ***Penny Party***

06 – 12:00pm 6<sup>th</sup> Hour

7:15pm Bible Study via GoogleMeets

10 – 10:00am Divine Liturgy

13 – 12:00pm 6<sup>th</sup> Hour

7:15pm Bible Study via GoogleMeets

17 – 10:00am Divine Liturgy

20 – 12:00pm 6<sup>th</sup> Hour

7:15pm Bible Study via GoogleMeets

24 – 10:00am Divine Liturgy

7:00pm Compline & Matins

25 – 10:00am Divine Liturgy

*Feast of the Nativity of Our Lord*

#### **Can't join us in person?**

We stream our services on our YouTube Channel:

<https://www.youtube.com/@sspeterpaulorthodoxchurch01810>



ORTHODOX CHURCH FATHERS



Our life and our death is with our neighbor. If we gain our brother, we have gained God, but if we scandalize our brother, we have sinned against Christ.

St. Antony the Great



## TO LOVE GOD ABOVE ALL

Today we celebrate the memory of the Venerable Herman of Alaska, the patron saint of North America. There is so much that is praiseworthy in the life of this man of God that one hardly knows where to begin. He was an ascetic who dwelt as an anchorite in the forests from the time of his early childhood. He was a zealous missionary who, like the righteous Abraham, left his home and his fatherland for the sake of the Kingdom of Heaven, not for himself only but for all of us who have received the precious gift of Orthodoxy on this continent. Though a hermit and a lover of solitude, he nevertheless joyfully took care of his orphans and fearlessly defended the native Aleuts from exploitation by his own people. He was a monk who, out of his deep humility, refused ordination to the priesthood, and so was sent an angel from heaven on the day of the Lord's Theophany to bless holy water for him. He was a man who lived so wholly in the Kingdom of Heaven even during this earthly life that, when asked whether he ever grew lonely living by himself in his island hermitage, he could not even comprehend how such a thing could be possible, surrounded as he was by such a countless host of angels.

Alas, how far removed are our own lives from everything that has just been spoken concerning this saint! After standing in church and gazing at the holy icon and relic of this chosen vessel of the Holy Spirit, when we then turn our gaze inward toward our own hearts, we see there all too clearly our vanity, our all-consuming self-love, our petty weakness, our sinful depravity, our spiritual emptiness. Here before us there shines radiantly a living example of what it means to truly be a Christian, and the light of that truth reveals all too clearly the darkness in which we instead so often choose to walk.

When we begin to understand, even a little, how far short we fall from what we are meant to be, from what the grace of Christ has given us the power to be, we are forced to ask ourselves why. What is it that prevents us from acquiring this grace, from truly changing our sinful lives? All of us standing here, simply by virtue of the fact that we are standing here, have tried at least a little to leave the things of this

earth behind; all of us standing here have, to one extent or another, failed.

Perhaps this might cause us to doubt the power or the love of God, or perhaps we might simply resolve to force ourselves to try harder going forward. Yet St. Herman is living proof of the power of the grace and the love of God, and the experience of our own lives has without doubt already shown us the futility of our own striving, no matter how fervent or well-intentioned it may be. Why, then, do we still fail?

Let us not underestimate the importance of this question. Indeed, in facing this question a Christian is threatened by the greatest of all possible spiritual dangers, for behind it stand the twin threats of



apostasy on the one hand, and despair on the other. And there are surely no more certain roads to perdition than these.

Yet just as the life of St. Herman confronts us with this question, so too does it reveal to us the answer. Simeon Yanovsky, one of the colonial administrators in Alaska who knew St. Herman, tells the following story about the saint. It is a famous story, and rightly so, for it contains a great truth:

Once the Elder was invited aboard a frigate which came from St. Petersburg. The Captain of

the frigate was a highly educated man, who had been sent to America by order of the Emperor to make an inspection of all the colonies. There were more than twenty-five officers with the Captain, and they also were educated men. In the company of this group sat a monk of a hermitage, small in stature and wearing very old clothes...

Father Herman gave them all one general question: 'Gentlemen, What do you love above all, and what will each of you wish for your happiness?' Various answers were offered ... Some desired wealth, others glory, some a beautiful wife, and still others a beautiful ship he would captain; and so forth in the same vein. 'Is it not true,' Father Herman said to them concerning this, 'that all your various wishes can bring us to one conclusion - that each of you desires that which in his own understanding he considers the best, and which is most worthy of his love?' They all answered, 'Yes, that is so!'

And here St. Herman reveals to us the root of our obstinacy in sin. It is, as it turns out, almost painfully simple: we spend our lives seeking after whatever it is that we love. And as long as we love our own pleasure or power or praise, or anything else of ourselves or of this world, it will remain absolutely impossible for our lives to change. No matter how much we might try to force ourselves, it remains inevitable that - as our Lord said - "A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is evil" (Luke 6:45). We cannot simply choose to stop sinning; instead, we must choose to stop loving all the many things that cause us to sin. We must renounce all the inner hungers, the deep and hidden desires, that draw us away from God.

How can this happen? How can the human heart learn turn away from earthly lusts and begin instead to truly love our Lord Jesus Christ? Well, there is one way which is really quite simple: by keeping Him always before the eyes of our heart. By walking always before the face of God. The divine beauty of Christ has the power to break even the hardest of hearts, and to break the spell of even the most seductive of earthly loves. As St. Isaac the Syrian says, we will never be able to overcome the love of this world and its pleasures unless we set before the eyes of our soul the beauty of the age to come. And this indeed is what



repentance — metanoia — truly means: not a feeling of guilt or even godly sorrow, but the turning of our heart towards God.

So many of the spiritual tools and disciplines and practices which we have been given as Orthodox Christians are in fact designed precisely in order to allow us to catch even if but a glimpse of divine beauty. This is why we fast, this is why we pray, this is why come as often as possible into the temple of God or stand before the holy icons at home: so that we might create at least a few small opportunities in our lives for us to stop all of our endless consumption and care and distraction, and learn finally and at long last to simply pay attention to God. And if we only do this, then He Himself will take care of all the rest.

This is also why the Holy Scriptures and the holy monastic fathers tell us that the remembrance of death is enough to overcome every sin. More than anything else, the remembrance of our death reveals to us the treacherous deceit of the swiftly passing pleasures of this world on the one hand, and the eternal and unfading beauty of the Kingdom of Heaven on the other.

Of course, none of this is easy. Perhaps the most profound line Dostoevsky ever wrote is: “The terrible thing is that beauty is not only fearful but also mysterious. Here the devil is struggling with God, and the battlefield is the human heart.” For most of us, this struggle will last a lifetime. Our hearts are hardened and slow to change. But nevertheless let each of us patiently remind ourselves again and again of these truths, and so over time learn with God’s help to see through the tired lies of our old sinful pleasures. Let us as often as possible, and with all the love that we can find within our hearts, set before ourselves the holy things of God: the divine Scriptures, the holy icons, the hymns of the Church, the writings of the Holy Fathers, the lives of the saints. Let us also not forget to set before ourselves our own brothers and sisters around us in whom Christ mystically dwells, and let us open our hearts to be moved and inspired by their living examples of love and self-sacrifice. And above all let us constantly, with reverent awe and humble gratitude, remember our Savior Himself, the love with which He has loved us, and the grace and mercy and providential care which He always and unfailingly bestows upon us despite our innumerable weaknesses and failings and falls into sin.

If we are faithful in these things, then without any doubt the grace which so brilliantly illumines St. Herman will also illumine our own hearts. And in the light of that grace we will see not only the depths of our sinfulness, but also the glorious and inexpressible heights of the beauty of Christ and the eternal riches that await those who love Him in the Kingdom of His Father. Therefore, in the words of St. Herman himself: “From this day, from this hour, from this minute, let us strive to love God above all and fulfill His holy will.”

Through the prayers of our venerable and God-bearing father Herman the Wonderworker of Alaska, O Lord Jesus Christ our God, have mercy on us. Amen.

*Holy Cross Monastery*

*11/28/2023*

### **PENNY PARTY 2023!**

We are holding our annual Penny Party next Sunday, December 10. If you would like to make a donation of a new/ unopened item to be raffled off, please talk to Tish Desloges. Sundays are always a good day to drop off donations, but you can contact Fr. Nicholas (860-861-7468) to arrange a drop-off during the week.

***We are beginning to prepare the 2023 community Christmas card. To have your name included, see Jim Schaeffer or Debbie Krimetz after Liturgy or send a minimum donation of \$10 or more with a notice that it is for the Christmas card.***

## St. Angelos the New Martyr

Angel was a devout Christian from Argos in the Peloponnese and practiced as a physician in Kusadasi, near Ephesus, in the early 19th century. One day he entered into a debate about faith with a French traveller, whose lack of hope greatly angered him, and therefore challenged him to a duel. He did this to show the blasphemer the power that true faith gives Christians, and therefore he went to the duel armed only with a stick. When they met that night, the Frenchman, seeing the holy courage of the servant of God, was overcome with great fear and turned back, and consequently the Angel was declared victorious. After this event, the Angel decided to abandon his profession and all connections with the world and stay in his house, to devote himself entirely to God.

But on Lazarus Saturday, 1813, this man who was ready to shed his blood for Christ, denied his religion without any cause, simply on his own initiative. He left the city of Nafplio and went as a stranger to Chios, where he came to his senses and began to repent, calling for help all the confessors and holy martyrs of the faith. From this moment his only concern was to find an opportunity to make amends for his apostasy by the shedding of blood. He went to a customs house and loudly announced to the Turkish soldiers and officers that he was a Christian who was returning to the religion of his ancestors. The saint was brutally tortured and beaten before being taken to the fortress, where he was beheaded on December 3, 1813.



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***“Like as the hart desireth the water-brooks, so longeth my soul after Thee, O God. My soul is athirst for God; yea, even for the living God!” (Psalm 41/42:1-2)***

*This is not a cry by a poor and simple man, who had no way of refreshing his soul with human wisdom, worldly knowledge and skills, philosophy and art: the knowledge of the fine threads from which the lives of men and nature are woven. It is not; but it is the sad and heartfelt cry of a king, rich with earthly riches, genial in mind, noble in the motions of his heart, and powerful in the strength and acts of his will. Refreshing his soul with all of these, for which the unfree soul craves in this world, King David suddenly felt that his spiritual thirst was not only unquenched but had grown to such proportions that all this material universe was in no way able to quench it. He then felt himself to be, in this world, in a barren and dry land, where no water is (Psalm 62/63:2), and cried to God as the only Source of immortal drink, for which a rational, awakened soul yearns. “My soul is athirst for God; yea, even for the living God!”*

+ St. Nikolai Velimirovich, Homilies: Commentary on the Gospel Readings for Great Feasts and Sundays Throughout the Year, Volume 1, “24. The Gospel on the Giver of Living Water and the Samaritan Woman John 4:5-42”