

Sts. Peter and Paul Albanian Orthodox Church

First-enthroned of the apostles, teachers of the universe: Entreat the Master of all to grant peace to the world, and to our souls great mercy!

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December 13, 2020

26TH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST : SUNDAY OF THE HOLY
FOREFATHERS, REPOSE OF VEN. HERMAN OF ALASKA
TONE 2

Today 10:00am Divine Liturgy
Wed. 16 7:15pm Bible Study via Google
Sun. 20 10:00am Divine Liturgy

One must be baptized and chrismated an Orthodox Christian to receive Holy Communion. Guests are invited to receive a blessing at the chalice and partake of the post-Communion bread (Antidoron).

Fast Days: Strict fast all week (fasting from meat, fish, eggs, dairy, oil, wine and hard spirits as you are able.) Fish, wine and oil are allowed Sunday and Saturday. Wine and oil are also allowed on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday.

Troparion – Tone 7
(St. Herman)

*O joyful North Star of the Church of Christ,
guiding all men to the Heavenly Kingdom,
teacher and apostle of the True Faith,
intercessor and defender of the oppressed,
adornment of the Orthodox Church in America:
Blessed Father Herman of Alaska,
pray to our Lord Jesus Christ for the salvation of our souls!*

Kontakion – Tone 6
(Forefathers)

*You did not worship the graven image,
O thrice-blessed ones,
but armed with the immaterial Essence of God,
you were glorified in a trial by fire.
From the midst of unbearable flames you called on God, crying:
“Hasten, O compassionate One!
Speedily come to our aid, //
for Thou art merciful and able to do as Thou dost will!”*

Prayers for those in our Sts. Peter and Paul community (parishioners, family, friends) can be listed for remembrance in our litanies during the Liturgy. Feel free to give names to Fr. Nicholas - please indicate how each person listed is connected to us (parishioner, family, friend, etc.), as well as why we are praying for them (health, memory, travel, etc.).

Confessions can be heard by appointment. If you need, I will come to you during the week. Please do not hesitate to call for a time to drop by the church or to have me visit you.

Remembrances for both the living and the dead during the prayers of preparation of the Eucharistic Lamb and during the Augmented Litany should be given the week before the desired remembrance so that the names can be put into the bulletin and given to the Deacons for the prayers. Any names of the living that are not marked as sick or traveling will be listed under general prayers.

SCRIPTURE THIS WEEK

Church Lectionary

Today

Galatians 5:22-6:2
Luke 6:17-23
Colossians 3:4-11
Luke 14:16-24

Monday

2 Timothy 2:20-26
Mark 8:11-21

Tuesday

2 Timothy 3:16-4:4
Mark 8:22-26

Wednesday

2 Timothy 4:9-22
Mark 8:30-34

Thursday

Titus 1:5-2:1
Mark 9:10-16

Friday

Titus 1:15-2:10
Mark 9:33-41

Saturday

Galatians 3:8-12
Luke 13:18-29
Ephesians 1:16-23
Luke 14:1-11

Reading the Bible in a Year

Dec 13: Titus
Dec 14: Philemon
Dec 15: Hebrews 1-3
Dec 16: Hebrews 4-6
Dec 17: Hebrews 7-9
Dec 18: Hebrews 10-13
Dec 19: James

"With regards to patience the Lord says, 'You will gain possession of your souls through your patient endurance' (Lk. 21:19). He did not say "through your fasting" or "through your vigils". I refer to the patience bestowed by God, which is the queen of virtues, the foundation of courageous actions. It is patience that is peace amid strife, serenity amid distress, and a steadfast base for those who acquire it. Once you have attained it with the help of Christ Jesus, no swords and spears, no attacking armies, not even the ranks of demons, the dark phalanx of hostile powers, will be able to do you any harm."

-St. Gregory of Sinai

We must always live our lives in preparation

Increasingly, many of us Orthodox Christians have been wondering if we are perhaps coming into the age of the Anti-Christ. Events around the world have created a sense of doom among many believers, what with the Covid-19 pandemic, the economic collapse due to the closing of countless businesses world-wide, the rise of militant Islam, extreme climate change, and the breakdown of societal norms. Could all these events be serving as precursors to the coming of the End Times?

It is important that we remember Christians in the first century were prepared for the end of times and the second coming of Christ. Christians have always been prepared, as we should. We are struggling against the principalities of darkness, just as God's people have been struggling since the fall of humankind. This life is full of spiritual warfare. The hour for the return of Christ is not to be revealed, for only the Father knows the time and the hour, as Christ Himself told us.

What is important is that we be prepared for our own end. None of us knows when our own end will come. At seventy-five I am more aware of my own ultimate end than ever before. I've had increasing numbers of friends depart this life, some after illnesses, some without warning. All of us must be prepared to give account for our lives before the Lord at any given moment, and we dare not expect time to repent, for most of us will meet our end without warning.

Health of the Parish



\$15,000.00

\$10,000.00

\$5,000.00

Whether these are the End Times or not, we must live our lives in preparation for that final moment of accountability. In the end, Christ will triumph over evil, and that is a fact. For now, we must fight the battle, that we, too, will triumph over evil.

Now is the time we Orthodox Christians need to submit ourselves to the love and mercy of God, and repent of our sins before the Lord. Now is the time when we must immerse ourselves in a life of prayer and repentance, knowing that this, ultimately, is not our true home. This age of pandemic, and the accompanying of a dumbed down Christianity that has lost the respect of our governmental leaders, is the time we must bring to the surface the same boldness and commitment that was common among the first century Christians.

Orthodoxy is an incredibly down-to-earth faith. Some people are responding to the idea that we may be entering into the end times in unbalanced, unsober ways, such as indulging in emotional highs or panicky fears, much like we have seen among many responses to this pandemic lock-down. However, our Orthodox faith calls us to humble, loving sobriety. The salvation of one's soul through love of God and neighbor, should always be of main importance – the fact that we may be in the end times, or may be being manipulated by some “secret plots”, should never be an end in itself. God comes first.

During these times that seem to be preparing Orthodox Christians for a kind of replay of the “Catacomb Era” of the Early Church, we must put off all fear that the world would foist on us, and cling to the treasure that the martyrs discovered, that of a Co-Suffering Saviour that will not abandon us to the evil one, but will lift us up to a life of Eternal Bliss, where we will all worship before the Throne of God for all eternity.

With love in Christ,
Abbot Tryphon

December Events

December

13 – 10:00am Divine Liturgy

16 – 7:15pm Bible Study

20 – 10:00am Divine Liturgy

24 – 7:00pm Compline & Matins

25 – 10:00am Divine Liturgy

Nativity of our Lord

27 – 10:00am Divine Liturgy

31 – 7:00pm Vespertal Liturgy (*St. Basil*)

Last year we began a beautiful tradition of adorning our parish Christmas tree with personally inscribed glass teardrop ornaments that parishioners purchased in memory of their loved ones. This was a successful fundraiser for the church, but more importantly, it transformed our parish Christmas tree into a blessed memorial for our beloved families and friends, priests and bishops, and fellow parishioners who have fallen asleep in the Lord.

We would like to keep this tradition going. Ornaments may be brought back to the church on Sundays for Liturgy, or you can contact Fr. Nicholas for pick-up or drop-off during the week.

Colossians 3:4-11 (Epistle)

When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory. Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. Because of these things the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience, in which you yourselves once walked when you lived in them. But now you yourselves are to put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth. Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds, and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him, where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised nor uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave nor free, but Christ is all and in all.

Luke 14:16-24 (Gospel)

Then He said to him, "A certain man gave a great supper and invited many, and sent his servant at supper time to say to those who were invited, 'Come, for all things are now ready.' But they all with one accord began to make excuses. The first said to him, 'I have bought a piece of ground, and I must go and see it. I ask you to have me excused.' And another said, 'I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I am going to test them. I ask you to have me excused.' Still another said, 'I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.' So that servant came and reported these things to his master. Then the master of the house, being angry, said to his servant, 'Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in here the poor and the maimed and the lame and the blind.' And the servant said, 'Master, it is done as you commanded, and still there is room.' Then the master said to the servant, 'Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled.' For I say to you that none of those men who were invited shall taste my supper."

Children's Word

Covering our mouths!

These days, what do we all have to wear on our faces? When we are around other people, we have to cover our faces with masks, don't we? The masks are supposed to keep our germs in, just in case we're sick.

In the epistle reading, we hear about how God wants us to cover our mouths in a different way! Saint Paul tells us in the epistle, "But now put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and foul talk from your mouth. Do not lie to one another." Saint Paul is telling us to keep these things in, and don't let them out. Don't let them spread to others!

In a way, we have to cover our mouths so we won't let these bad things out. We have to be careful so we don't get really mad, or say mean things about another person. We have to be careful that we don't lie about people or gossip. We have to be careful not to say bad words.

We wear masks so we can keep germs away from other people. But as Christians, we have to always wear an imaginary mask over our mouths! We wear this mask so we don't let these horrible things out. The epistle reminds us that Christians don't do these things, because now we imitate God. So, let's wear our imaginary masks all the time, and keep our mean words from others!

SAINT SEBASTIAN THE CROWN OF VICTORY

Have you ever done something wrong...and you tried not to get caught? Maybe you stole a treat from the kitchen, and you ate it in secret! It's hard to take the punishment.

This week, we celebrate a saint who did everything right, but he still got in trouble for it! He knew he was going to get punished, but he even looked for the person who would punish him!

Saint Sebastian lived in Rome, just about two hundred years after Saint Paul lived there! He loved Christ, and he knew he would never give up his strong faith. The emperor Diocletian knew about him and had him tied to a tree and shot with arrows. But Sebastian didn't die from these arrows. Another Christian took him and healed him. Still, Saint Sebastian didn't give up! He even went to the emperor again, to warn him that he had done these awful things. He told the emperor he had sinned! This time, Diocletian made sure Sebastian was killed, and Sebastian received the best reward, a place in heaven with the Lord.

Just about 100 years after Sebastian's death, another saint from Italy (Saint Ambrose) wrote about Saint Sebastian. He said whenever there are "crowns of victory" you have to have "tests of strength." Saint Ambrose tells us how Saint Sebastian won the "crown of victory" because he passed these hard tests. He kept his strong faith all along! We celebrate St. Sebastian on Friday, December 18th.

REAL Life!

December 10, 2020 · Fr. Barnabas Powell

“I don’t believe in God.” “OK” I told him. “Tell me about this god you don’t believe in.” This young man began describing Zeus. You know, a god who is vindictive and angry; who punishes the mortals with the lightning bolts of pain and sorrow. This god tries to control humans through threats and rewards. As the young man kept describing this “god” he didn’t believe in, I discovered I agreed with him. I didn’t believe in this “god” either. Imagine his surprise when I said “Oh, I see. Well, I don’t believe in that “god” either. I’m an atheist about that god.”

All too often today, we deal with people who reject God and the Faith based on a wrong view of God. And, truth be told (I mean, let’s be honest here), many people have the wrong view of God based on how we who say we believe in God act! We aren’t the best role models about the God we say we believe in. AND, this, many times is a result in our own wrong view of God.

Look at our lesson today in 1 Timothy 6:17-21:

TIMOTHY, my son, charge the rich in this world not to be haughty, nor to set their hopes on uncertain riches but on God who richly furnishes us with everything to enjoy. They are to do good, to be rich in good deeds, liberal and generous, thus laying up for themselves a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of the life which is life indeed. O Timothy, guard what has been entrusted to you. Avoid the godless chatter and contradictions of what is falsely called knowledge, for by professing it some have missed the mark as regards the faith. Grace be with you. Amen.

I love Paul’s words to Timothy here, and it isn’t a mistake that the Church has us read these words during this time of year. Paul wants to make sure Timothy leads his parish correctly so he insists Timothy teach clearly the whole purpose of the Faith.

And it may surprise you that the purpose of the Faith isn’t so you’ll know how to “go to heaven” or even miss “hell.” No, the purpose of the faith (and you know I’m big on purpose) is to be set free from all the false notions about God SO THAT I can become LIKE God. And what is God like? In another place, the scriptures insist that God IS Love. God IS Life Himself. If I am ever going to be like God and be truly alive, it’s going to be by learning to love as God loves.

And Paul reveals true life and true love first by insisting Timothy warn us about rejecting the false idea of life as being about accumulating stuff! Too often in our society we come to believe that the acquiring of stuff is how to be happy or how to have a “good” life. It’s a trap. It’s a dead end. All of us know people who have lots of stuff and yet they aren’t happy or loving.

Turns out the path to true life is loving people and using things. Never the other way around. In fact, true riches is to be rich in “good deeds.” To excel in generosity is true life. But, of course that’s true life because that’s exactly how God is. He holds nothing back. He gives Himself in creating His universe. He gives Adam His very “breath,” the “breath” of life. He gives Himself in revealing Himself in His Son, God in the flesh. He gives Himself in entering into even our mortality to destroy mortality from the inside out! God IS Life. God IS Love.

We become like God when we are generous and sharing our treasures with others. When we avoid the haughty lie that my possessions somehow “make” me happy or safe or fulfilled. It doesn’t work. Never has!

No, the path to true life comes from the humble embrace of generosity of mercy, kindness, and seeing all my life as an invitation to give my life away rather than hoard my life to myself.

Today, are you “liberal” (not a very popular word in some circles) with your possessions? Do you fear losing your safety or your “security” if you are loving and generous? Then know you are in danger of a haughty delusion that your safety and securing can be obtained by selfishness. The true God, the God we are called to become like, is generous and kind even to His enemies. Being Orthodox on Purpose means being set free to know true life and the true God Who gives, expecting nothing in return!

К Колоссянам 3:4-11

Когда же явится Христос, жизнь ваша, тогда и вы явитесь с Ним во славе. Итак, умертвите земные члены ваши: блуд, нечистоту, страсть, злую похоть и любостяжание, которое есть идолослужение, за которые гнев Божий грядет на сынов противления, в которых и вы некогда обращались, когда жили между ними. А теперь вы отложите все: гнев, ярость, злобу, злоречие, сквернословие уст ваших; не говорите лжи друг другу, совлекшись ветхого человека с делами его и облекшись в нового, который обновляется в познании по образу Создавшего его, где нет ни Еллина, ни Иудея, ни обрезания, ни необрезания, варвара, Скифа, раба, свободного, но все и во всем Христос.

От Луки 14:16-24

Он же сказал ему: один человек сделал большой ужин и звал многих, и когда наступило время ужина, послал раба своего сказать званым: идите, ибо уже всё готово. И начали все, как бы сговорившись, извиняться. Первый сказал ему: я купил землю и мне нужно пойти посмотреть ее; прошу тебя, извини меня. Другой сказал: я купил пять пар волов и иду испытать их; прошу тебя, извини меня. Третий сказал: я женился и потому не могу придти. И, возвратившись, раб тот донес о сем господину своему. Тогда, разгневавшись, хозяин дома сказал рабу своему: пойдя скорее по улицам и переулкам города и приведи сюда нищих, увечных, хромых и слепых. И сказал раб: господин! исполнено, как приказал ты, и еще есть место. Господин сказал рабу: пойдя по дорогам и изгородям и убеди придти, чтобы наполнился дом мой. Ибо сказываю вам, что никто из тех званых не вкусит моего ужина, ибо много званых, но мало избранных.

Kolosianëve 3:4-1

Kur të shfaqet Krishti, jeta jonë, atëherë edhe ju do të shfaqeni në lavdi bashkë me të. Bëni, pra, të vdesin gjymtyrët tuaja që janë mbi tokë: kurvërinë, ndyrësinë, pasionet, dëshirat e këqija dhe lakminë, që është idhujtari; për këto gjëra zemërimi i Perëndisë vjen përmbi bijtë e mosbindjes, midis të cilëve dikur ecët edhe ju, kur rronit në to. Por tani hiqni edhe ju të gjitha këto gjëra: zemërim, zemëratë, ligësi, e mos të dalë sharje e asnjë e folur e pandershme nga goja juaj. Mos gënjeni njeri tjetrin, sepse ju e zhveshët njeriun e vjetër me veprat e tij, edhe veshët njeriun e ri, që përtërihet në njohurinë sipas shëmbullit të atij që e krijoi. Këtu nuk ka më Grek e Jud, rrethprerje dhe parrethprerje, Barbar e Skithas, shërbëtor e i lirë, por Krishti është gjithçka dhe në të gjithë.

Luka 14:16-24

Atëherë Jezusi i tha: "Një njeri përgatiti një darkë të madhe dhe ftoi shumë veta; dhe, në kohë të darkës, dërgoi shërbëtorin e vet t'u thotë të ftuarve: Ejani, sepse gjithçka tashmë është gatit". Por të gjithë, pa përjashtim, filluan të kërkojnë ndjesë. I pari i tha: Bleva një arë dhe më duhet të shkoj ta shoh; të lutem, të më falëshh". Dhe një tjetër tha: "Bleva pesë pendë qe dhe po shkoj t'i provoj; të lutem, të më falësh". Dhe një tjetër akoma tha: "Mora grua e prandaj nuk mund të vij". Kështu shërbëtori u kthye dhe ia dëftoi të gjitha zotit të vet. Atëherë i zoti i shtëpisë, plot zemërim, i tha shërbëtorit të vet: "Shpejt, shko nëpër sheshet dhe nëpër rrugët e qytetit e sill këtu lypës, sakatë, të çalë dhe të verbër". Pastaj shërbëtori i tha: "Zot, u bë ashtu siç urdhërove ti, por ka vend edhe më". Atëherë zoti i tha shërbëtorit: "Dil nëpër udhë dhe përgjatë gardheve dhe detyroji të hyjnë që të mbushet shtëpia ime. Sepse unë po ju them se asnjë nga ata njerëz që ishin të ftuar, nuk do ta shijojë darkën time".