

The Twenty-fifth Sunday after Pentecost; The Ninth Sunday of Luke

The Holy Martyr Plato of Ancyra; Martyr Romanos of Antioch; Martyrs Zacchaeus the Deacon Alphaeos the Reader of Caesarea in Palestine

Sunday, November 18, 2017

Tone 8; Eothinon 3

Apolytikion for the Resurrection (Tone 8)

From the heights Thou didst descend, O compassionate One, and Thou didst submit to the three-day burial, that Thou might deliver us from passion; Thou art our life and our Resurrection, O Lord, glory to Thee.

Apolytikion for our Patron, Michael the Archangel (Tone 2)

O ye foremost of the heavenly hosts, we beseech thee, though we are unworthy, pray that we may be encompassed with a shadow of thine unearthly glory; preserving us who kneel and cry endlessly: Deliver us from oppression since ye are the prince of the highest powers.

Kontakion for the Entrance Theotokos (Tone 4)

The sacred treasury of God's holy glory, the greatly precious bridal chamber and Virgin, the Savior's most pure temple, free of stain and undefiled, into the House of the Lord on this day is brought forward and bringeth with herself the grace of the Most Divine Spirit; her do God's Angels hymn with songs of praise, for she is truly the heavenly tabernacle.

Daily Readings

THE EPISTLE (for the Twenty-fifth Sunday after Pentecost)

Make your vows to the Lord our God and perform them.

God is known in Juday; His Name is great in Israel.

The Reading from the Epistle of St. Paul to the Ephesians (4:1-7)

Brethren, I, a prisoner for the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all lowliness and meekness, with patience, forbearing one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body

and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of us all, Who is above all and through all and in all. But grace was given to each of us according to the measure of Christ's gift.

THE GOSPEL (for the Ninth Sunday of Luke)

The Reading of the Holy Gospel is according to St. Luke (12:16-21)

The Lord spoke this parable: "The land of a rich man brought forth plentifully; and he thought to himself, 'What shall I do, for I have nowhere to store my crops?' And he said, 'I will do this: I will pull down my barns, and build larger ones; and there I will store all my grain and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; take your ease, eat, drink, be merry.' But God said to him, 'Fool! This night your soul is required of you; and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?' So is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God." As He said this, Jesus called out, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear."

The Synaxarion

On November 18 in the Holy Orthodox Church we commemorate the holy Great-Martyr Plato of Ancyra in Galatia.

Verses

Plato almost escaped unnoticed; that Plato,
I mean, whom the broad sword slaughtered.

On the eighteenth, a saber slew Plato.

Plato is the brother of the holy Martyr Antiochus the Physician (July 16). While still a youth, he left home and went through the cities, preaching the Word of God to pagans, amazing his audience with the persuasiveness and beauty of his speech, and his profound knowledge of Greek learning. For this, Plato was arrested and brought for trial to the temple of Zeus before the governor Agrippinus. At first, the judge attempted to persuade the saint to turn away from Christ by flattery. He assured the youth that he might be on a par of intellect with the greatest of the philosophers Plato, if only he worshipped also the pagan gods. To this, Saint Plato answered that the wisdom of the philosopher, although

great, was but ephemeral and limited; whereas the true, eternal and unbounded wisdom comprised the Gospel teachings. Agrippinus ordered the holy Martyr Plato to be beheaded, and he entered the Heavenly Kingdom in 266.

On this day, we also commemorate the Martyr Romanos of Antioch; Martyrs Zacchaeus the deacon and Alphaeos the reader of Caesarea in Palestine. By the intercessions of Thy Saints, O Christ God, have mercy upon us. Amen.

LITURGICAL CALENDAR

Fast of the Holy Nativity - November 15 - December 24

[This fast is divided into two periods: 1) November 15 - December 19 - the traditional fasting discipline includes no meat, poultry, dairy, fish, wine and olive oil on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays, with provision for wine and oil (some also permit fish) on Tuesdays and Thursdays; with fish, wine and olive oil on Saturdays and Sundays; 2) December 20-24 - the traditional fast is Monday through Friday with provision for wine and olive oil on Sunday, December 24.]

Feast of the Presentation of the Holy Theotokos - November 21
Vespereal Divine Liturgy, Tuesday, November 20, 6 p.m.

Thursday, November 22 (Thanksgiving Day - USA)

The Leave-taking (Apodosis) of the Entrance of the Theotokos
Feast of the Great Martyr Katherine the All-wise of Alexandria
The Thirteenth Sunday of Luke

Saturday, November 24th, Great Vespers, 5 p.m.

Sunday, November 25th, Orthros, 8:45 a.m., Divine Liturgy, 10 a.m.

A Note Regarding Holy Communion

Since we understand Communion to mean that we have all things in common, sharing an identical Faith, *only* those who are members of the Orthodox Church and who have prepared themselves through prayer, fasting and recent Confession may participate in Holy Communion. (We invite all, however, to partake of the blessed bread which is distributed at the dismissal.) Please see the Pastor for inquiries on how to become a member.

OFFERINGS

The Holy Bread is being offered and the Coffee Hour hosted this morning by Laila Abughazaleh with prayers for the members of her family who were born in November. Prayers are also being offered for Bassem Azzam, asking God to keep him in His gracious care; also in memory of brother-in-law, Anton Karam (+2007). Memory eternal.

Holy Bread is also being offered for the five-year memorial of Helen Zaki (+16 November, 2013), beloved mother and grandmother, by Sam, Rafik and Laila Yanni, Rami & Yuriko Yanni and family. Memory eternal.

Special offerings and requests for prayer are being made . . .

for all recovering from the loss of homes, property
and loved ones from the recent fires.

for the healing and recovery of Edward George Deeb, Jr., by Louise,
Edward George III, Amy; Elias; Gina and Jeanice Deeb.

for the repose of the newly-departed Dorothy (+16 November, 2018),
mother of Eric Nelson. Memory eternal.

for the continued safety of Firefighters: Ryan and Weston,
grandsons of Ted & Cecelia Coudsy

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Special Parish Meeting

In accordance with our Parish Constitution, we will convene a Meeting of the Voting Membership today, immediately following Liturgy for the purpose of accepting nominations for the election of three (3) persons to fulfill three (3) three-year terms to the Parish Council (2019–2021). Nominations will also be received from the floor, however, it would be appropriate to first: 1) inquire with the Pastor if they are qualified to be nominated (before asking the person); 2) inquire with the person you intend to nominate if they will accept nomination. We sincerely thank Carrie Sadd Khouri, Chair of the Nominations Committee. Please be sure to sign-in in order that we may verify a quorum for the meeting. The Parish

Constitution prescribes that all nominees must be at least twenty-five years of age or older, have been a pledging member of the parish for at least one year and have fulfilled the canonical requirements of the Faith [Article VI, Sec. 2]. The nominees must also be committed in attending monthly Parish Council meetings held on the third (3rd) Sunday of each month. We sincerely thank Eric Nelson [ending his seventh consecutive year; able to be appointed for a one-year term]; Richard Ajalat [electable; appointed to complete the first (1st) term of the late, Caren Deeb Kouri]; and Richard Tamoush [completing his first (1st) term; re-electable]. Our three (3) one-year appointed members whose terms are expiring are: David Alexander [first year appointed], Amy Castillo [second year appointed], and Regan Hines [first year appointed]. The Parish Council election will be held on: November 25 and December 2. Our Parish Constitution does not allow for "absentee ballots." Council members whose terms are unexpired are: Joe Ayoub, Carrie Sadd Khouri, Connie Abdun-Nur Barilla, Adam Lamar, Michael Mitchell, and Deacon Andrew Monsue. Charmaine Darmour is also completing her eighth (8th) consecutive year as President of the Antiochian Women.

Don't miss your chance to include your special message in the St. Michael 50th Anniversary Journal. The deadline is December 1st.

The 50th Anniversary Journal Committee is working hard to assemble the pictures, people, letters, and stories that will commemorate the history of St. Michael. We have had lots of interest from parishioners and friends of St. Michael from around the country who want to remember and celebrate family and friends in this historic Journal. If you and your family would like to place a special message in the 50th Anniversary Journal, see Samia Habib during coffee hour or go to the St. Michael Website www.stmichaelvannuys.org and click on the Events tab. The deadline to submit Journal forms is December 1, 2018. Remember, every family attending the 50th Anniversary Banquet will receive a copy of the Journal, and copies will be mailed to all contributors who are not able to join us. Your generous support of the Anniversary Journal will help us make a fine keepsake that you will cherish for years to come and will help make the Anniversary Banquet a successful and memorable event.

Thanksgiving and Christmas Charity Food Collection

This year, our parish will again be assisting a local food pantry ("Loaves and Fishes") in their new Van Nuys location. Please phone Cindy Tamoush at: 818-345-4363 if you are able to participate in our Thanksgiving and/or Christmas food collection. There are a few ways of participating:

1. If you wish for me to shop for you, just write a check made out to: "St. Michael Church," earmarked: "Holiday Food Collection." You will be credited on your year-end Financial Statement for tax purposes.
2. You can purchase grocery script for any amount. Don't forget to use your Ralph's Rewards Card so St. Michael may also benefit from your purchase.
3. Due to their lack of space, Loaves and Fishes is requesting any of the following: bottled water, personal care items, deodorant, soap, shampoo, toothbrushes, toothpaste, sanitary napkins and disposable razors, socks (for men and women), Any store scripts in denominations of \$5 or \$10. Please do not provide any clothing or household items.

All items must be at our church kitchen by today, November 18, and/or Sunday, December 16. Thank you for your support.

Office Hours This Week

The Comptroller's hours this week will be on Tuesday, November 20th instead of Wednesday, November 21st. Regular office hours will resume on Wednesday of the following week: November 28, 2018. You may also communicate with our Comptroller by e-mail at: maryanncoury@aol.com

Teen SOYO Raffle

Tickets for our Annual Teen SOYO Holiday Raffle are available each Sunday until the date of the drawing, Sunday, December 9, 2018, during our Church School Christmas Program. Proceeds from the raffle will help Teen SOYO sponsor the Special Olympics at the Antiochian Village.

Upcoming Events (see the foyer bulletin board for more information)

St. Matthew Church (2368 Sonoma Street, Torrance)

"South Bay Falafel Festival;" Sunday November 18, 12 noon to 6 pm.

Election of three (3) Parish Council vacancies:
Sunday, November 25 and Sunday, December 2.

St. Nicholas Day Luncheon - Sunday, December 2, 2018, 1 p.m.
St. Nicholas Cathedral (Los Angeles) Heritage Ballroom
\$35/adults; \$15/children 16 and younger

St. Michael Church School Christmas Program Rehearsal and Program
Saturday-Sunday, December 8-9, 2018

St. Michael Church (Whittier) Advent Retreat: December 8, 2018
“Obedience, Repentance and Pure Prayer” 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.
Speaker: V. Rev. Patrick O’Grady

Christmas Toy Collection

We will again be collecting new toys for the children of prisoners. The toys should not include guns or require batteries. We especially need sports items: soccer balls, basketballs, and games for the children. All financial contributions should be turned in no later than Sunday, December 2nd, and all toys should be at the church by the date of our Christmas Program – December 9th. All toys and clothing will be distributed by the Archdiocese Prison Ministry with the assistance of our parish in Palmdale.

Building Fund Donation Tax Benefits

A charitable donation of long-term appreciated securities, i.e., stocks, bonds and/or mutual funds that have realized significant appreciation over time is one of the best and most tax-efficient of all ways to give. This method of giving has become increasingly popular in recent years. There are two main advantages: 1) Any long-term appreciated securities with unrealized gains (meaning they were purchased over a year ago, and have a current value greater than their original cost) may be donated to the church with the benefit of receiving a tax deduction for the full fair value of the securities—up to 30% of the donor’s adjusted gross income; 2) since the securities/stock is being donated rather than sold, capital gains taxes from selling the securities no longer apply. And the more appreciation the securities have, the greater the tax savings will be. For more information please speak with Ron Zraick, Chairman of the Capital Funds Campaign Committee <ronaldzraick@yahoo.com>.

Note to Coffee Hour hosts: coffee and paper goods will be provided each week.

Holy Bread Offering List

Coffee Hour Hosts Calendar

Nov 25 - Alice & Carl Andrews
Dec 02 - the Azzam/Hallak families
Dec 09 - Carolyn Sadd
Salim El-Darzi and family
Dec 16 - the Meena family
Ron & Kathy Zraick
Dec 23 - open
Dec 30 - Ramez & Rima Hage

Nov 25 - The Sweis Family
Dec 02 - the Azzam/Hallak families
Dec 09 - Church School Christmas Luncheon
Dec 16 - the Meena family
Dec 23 - open
Dec 30 - Ramez & Rima Hage

Please contact Fr. Timothy (818/219-3761; pastor@stmichaelvannuys.org) to sign-up to offer Holy Bread and Cindy Tamoush at: (818-345-4363; famtam5@socal.rr.com) to sign-up for the Coffee Hour.

Christmas Program Lenten Lunch

Our Church School Christmas Program Lenten lunch menu on Sunday, December 9, 2018 will include: Lenten pizza, salads and Christmas cookies. Please contact Subdeacon Richard Ajalat at: <rajalat@stmichaelvannuys.org> or phone him at: 818-800-2418 (mobile) to assist with providing donated items for the menu. We are attempting to coordinate all contributions in order not to have left-overs or an excess of items. Thank you for your help.

**“O Lord, I Have Loved the Beauty of Thy House” (LXX Psalm 25:7)
Part Fifteen**

The following article is the fifteenth of a series of writings that helps us to understand how the relationship between the art, architecture and music of the Orthodox Church communicates the presence of the Kingdom of God in this world. This, and subsequent articles are written by Father Timothy Baclig.

Worshipping God in an Orthodox church sanctuary can be best described as a concelebration. Unlike our personal, private and devotional prayers, when we gather as the people of God “putting aside all worldly care,” we enter the church in faith as believers of “one mind and one heart.” And while we may not all serve as a Bishop, Priest, Deacon, Chanter, altar server or a member of the choir, our concelebration means that we are not mere spectators to a

performance. To sing in the choir is to lead in worship and not to be performing a concert, just as to serve in the altar is not being a help to the priest “backstage.” This also means that the selections of melodies chosen for the Liturgy should always encourage concelebration and be familiar to the congregation. They are part of a continuing whole in the Divine Liturgy and not sporadic interludes with “favorite selections” used to augment or break up the “usual melody” in the sequence of prayer. New melodies must be introduced at appropriate times and not disrupt the *ethos* and continuity of worship.

Music used in our church today have comprised a long history of musical arrangements by musicians and composers who have done a great deal to provide our churches with appropriate melodies that are compatible with the contemplative nature of Orthodox worship. Some of these musicians have included Dr. Frank Desby, Rev. Basil Kazan, the V. Rev. James Meena, and more recently, the V. Rev. John Finley. Since worship in the Orthodox church does not include the use of instruments, singing in a group requires attentive ears, which like the line and color images of iconography, form the appropriate sound with the use of trained voices. Most importantly, chanters, singers and readers must first think of using their voice in prayer.

Slavic chant melodies were of a distinct characteristic form Arabic and Greek chant. Over several decades, American musicians worked to write four-part choral music for choirs that aimed to preserve the integrity of Traditional melodies that were originally chanted by men. Throughout history there have been two distinct trends: One that formed more difficult “concert like” compositions (i.e., Rachmaninov Liturgy), and another that developed simple four-part melodies that encouraged congregational singing. Following the large influence and success of transposing slavic melodies to English that was mentioned in my last article, there evolved in time, a synthesis of Slavic-Byzantine melodies, such that it was often difficult to identify one from the other. This can be seen in the iconographic images that were being written by No. American iconographers and is evident in the mixture of Slavic and Byzantine iconography in American Orthodox churches. The greatest success of any musician in arranging music for Orthodox worship is his or her ability to make the content of the text (the words of theology) the most important part of a

musical composition. In other words, a congregant who attends the Liturgy or any prayer service of the church should be able to pray and not just enjoy or focus upon a melody or sound. And so, the calling of a church musician (reader, chanter, or singer) requires someone who is steeped in prayer, is well trained in knowing the order within the various church services, and understands the purpose and function of liturgical music. Such a calling is no different for someone who aspires to be an iconographer, sacristan or a seamstress in designing and sewing liturgical vestments.

While each person is called to serve in particular leading roles of the church, our prayers, whether they be said or sung, are something we do together in worshipping God at the appropriate times. This is the meaning of concelebration. Hence, no one serves as a “soloist” in saying the prayers or singing or chanting the melodies of the hymns in Orthodox worship. The prayers and hymns are ours in a contemplative way as we pay attention to the content of what is being said or sung and make it our own. Our participation is with an attentive meditation, and by responding in the “dialogue” within the Liturgy. The priest says, “Peace be to all!” and the people respond: “And to thy spirit.” Then he says, “Let us lift up our hearts.” And we respond, “We lift them up unto the Lord...,” and so forth. The structure of Orthodox hymnology is also *antiphonal*, meaning, they often consist of two parts: a) the clergy and the people, also b) two choirs, when sections of the service are repeated. In the early period there was a “right” and “left” choir in services, most common during the services of Great Lent, Holy Week and Pascha. Hence the design of two apse sections in the forward nave of the church. It was always understood that you and I need to have things repeated in prayer. The imperfect and distracted mind is not always able to comprehend the first time a lesson is heard. When Jesus cautioned his disciples against the use of “vain repetition” (Matthew 6:7). He was not speaking against repetition, only the pagan practice of what was not prayerful or meaningful.

Worshipping God together in God’s sanctuary therefore requires a discipline that includes: personal preparation, anticipation and attentiveness. Entering God’s earthly sanctuary must be unlike being present any other place or event on earth. Therefore, we must be aware of what is expected of us. “Going

to church” to encounter God is first, a procession; like a pilgrimage. It begins with our decision to be present, to be on-time, to be in a right frame of mind, to focus our attention upon God’s word, His teaching, but is also a joyful entrance into His house with thanks and praise. Without discipline, our minds are easily overshadowed by the cares and worries of the world and all that we have been preoccupied with in our daily lives.

In many churches, the singers are robed, like the altar boys, but in a non-ceremonial way. There are a few choirs in Orthodox churches in North America that have their singers robed, however this is more prevalent in other Christian churches today. Orthodox church choirs have taken on an “organization” status if not become a “club,” and in some communities its members are even voted into the choir in order to participate. It must be understood that the church’s Tradition did in fact consider “singers” to be persons “set apart” for a particular rank of ministry, similar to those who were called (selected) to serve in the altar and were robed. Canon 15 from the Council of Nicaea (325 AD), makes it clear: that only canonical singers should be appointed for that kind of ministry in the Church; meaning: those who are “set apart” for a particular ministry with the rank of tonsured Readers. This was the case because it was understood that there were certain qualities, skills and talents that were necessary. In the case of a Reader or Chanter, obviously, being able to read correctly and clearly; also to project one’s voice properly. Bear in mind that in the early church, there were no public address systems. Consequently, Orthodox churches were also intentionally designed to provide for the proper acoustics. Curved apses and domes added to the profound quality of the sound in a church; which also in the earliest period did not include pews or carpeting. We will further explore the structural nature of the church sanctuary in upcoming articles.

In conclusion, as seriously as the ordained clergy need to prepare themselves to serve at the altar, so should those who fulfill the role as Readers, Chanters or “singers.” Canonically, they are in fact among the orders of the Church that lead the assembled faithful in prayer and should regard their calling with a real sense of humility. [End of Part XIV]

{For further reading on this particular subject see Bishop BASIL’s message: “The Ministry of Church Singers” on the Antiochian Archdiocese website: <http://ww1.antiochian.org/node/22680>}

**St. Michael Antiochian Orthodox Church
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*And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things,
at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work.
(II Corinthians 9:8)*

Beloved in Christ,

Subdeacon Richard Tamoush, Chair of our Stewardship Committee, will be speaking this morning on Christian Stewardship as we prepare to plan for a new calendar year and our Parish Council works to provide us with our 2019 Annual Budget. A parish cannot solely rely upon the income of Sacramental offerings because we would not be able to meet our month-to-month expenses based upon anticipating baptisms, weddings, or funerals that will take place each year, nor can we adequately pay for our ongoing maintenance without the shared responsibility of our membership. Our parish is able to provide its clergy and facilities, the prayer services of the church and its Sacraments because of our faithful who help to financially support salaries and the operational costs of our church property.

Please give Subdeacon Richard your attention this morning as he does his best to explain how you can help in making a reasonable financial pledge to our parish for the New Year. We have much to be thankful for in anticipating our 50th year as a parish community. We look forward to honoring our past and facing the challenges of the future. Thanks to the commitments of many who have provided us with funds to begin the construction of our new church sanctuary, we are moving forward to complete a water-tight building and will be entering a new phase of our project to complete the interior of our new temple.

May God bless you and you your family with His grace in granting you continued health and prosperity.

In Christ,

V. Rev. Timothy Baclig

Pastor

THE CHRISTMAS FAST – ADVENT

The Church ordains that this preparation begins on November 15. The Fast is forty days long and is sometimes known as Philip's Fast because it begins the day after November 14, which is dedicated to St. Philip the Apostle.

The Fast has very ancient origins. Leo the Great, in the Fifth Century, made mention of it as an ancient, established Fast, which gave importance to the event of the Birth of Christ by the Church, even at that time. The Christians Church did not universally observe the Fast in length and method until the Council of Constantinople in 1166 AD. It was at that Council that the ancient regulations and various customs and traditions of the churches were studied and forty days was chosen to be most representative.

Many of us want the Feast without the penitential note that precedes it. We want Christmas without Advent. The result is that most of us only “observe” the day of Christmas and fail to “keep” the day holy. The Christmas fast gives us time to meditate upon the meaning of our Lord's coming (God born as a man) – in the past, present, and future. Only to the extent that we prepare carefully for His Coming can we receive Him worthily. Hence, as Christmas approaches, we should be aware of the meaning of the Christmas fast (Advent) upon us and our souls. Consciences need examination; sins need to be forgiven. Above all, souls need refreshment with His Sacramental Presence when the Christmas Fast ends and Christ is born.

SCHEDULE OF SERVICES

[The Sacrament of Confession with Absolution is available by appointment or up until 15 minutes prior to the services.]

The Sunday before The Holy Nativity

“The Sunday of the Genealogy”

Saturday, December 22nd – Great Vespers, 5 p.m.

Sunday, December 23rd – Orthros, 8:45 a.m., Divine Liturgy,* 10 a.m.

THE FEAST OF THE NATIVITY IN THE FLESH OF OUR LORD, GOD, AND SAVIOR, JESUS CHRIST

Monday, December 24th (Christmas Eve and *Paramon*)

The Ninth Royal Hour, 3 p.m.

Vesperal Divine Liturgy of St. Basil the Great* – 3:30 p.m.

Tuesday, December 25th (Christmas Day)
Orthros and the Christmas Canon, 8:30 a.m., Divine Liturgy,* 10 a.m.

[There is **no** fasting from December 25th to January 4th]

**The Circumcision of our Lord, God, and Savior Jesus Christ
and the Feast of St. Basil the Great (New Year's Day)**

Monday, December 31st (New Year's Eve) – Great Vespers, 5 p.m.
with prayers for the New Year

Tuesday, January 1st (New Year's Day) – Orthros, 8:45 a.m.;
Divine Liturgy,* 10 a.m., with prayers for the New Year

THE GREAT FEAST OF HOLY THEOPHANY (EPIPHANY)

Friday, January 4th — The Ninth Royal Hour, 4:30 p.m. followed by
Daily Vespers of the *Paramon* (Eve) of Theophany, 5 p.m.

Saturday, January 5th The Eve of Theophany (*Paramon*) – [observed as a strict fast day]
Daily Orthros, 9 a.m., The Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom* 10 a.m.

Great Vespers of Holy Theophany, 5 p.m.

Sunday, January 6th — Festal Orthros, 8:30 a.m. followed by “The Great Sanctification
of Water” immediately followed by The Festal Divine Liturgy

** Services with Holy Communion*

PASTORAL SERMON
The Ninth Sunday of Luke
By V. Rev. Timothy Baclig
November 18, 2018

Upon hearing today's Gospel lesson, you and I should ask ourselves: “How much is enough?” What do I need in order to live a life in such a way that I am not hoarding my possessions?

We all have responsibilities with serious concerns: a) providing for our family; which may include avoiding debt; doing everything we can to ensure that our children are educated; preparing for the needs of our retirement and concerns for our medical expenses. All of these things come with great uncertainty. They can, at the same time be

excuses for not sharing with others, especially those with great needs. Some of us, especially if we are blessed with good fortune, consider every possible way of avoiding taxes; we carefully plan our deductions, consider ways to multiply our income with wise investments; you know what I'm taking about. My point is: so much of our financial planning is without much certainty. We worry about tomorrow, but we clearly know that our Lord teaches us that we should not; yet our lives are seem largely dependent upon what resources we have.

So then I must ask: What does this morning's Gospel say to us? A great deal about what I've just said is relative if we are to take seriously what is taught by our Lord in the Gospel: Let me review some of His words with you. It is interesting to note that one-third of our Lord's teaching has a direct bearing upon what we do (or don't do) with our resources:

1. [Matthew 6:25ff] *...do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food and the body more important than clothes? Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not more valuable than they? Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life? (v. 33) But seek first [the Kingdom of God] and His righteousness...*
2. [Matthew 6:21; Luke 12:34] *Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. **For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.***

For the past two Sundays we have heard lessons that have focused our attention upon doing good works. Specifically, we have been reminded that our rich heritage in Christ, who is Himself, the fulfillment of the Law and the Prophets, calls us to be merciful. Moreover, it was made clear that "being merciful" should be the motivation of "making sacrifices."

Our Christian Tradition (in both the East and West) has observed a fast during the Season of Advent. Our church has kept a fast in preparation for the Great Feast of our Lord's coming. However, unlike Great Lent, this period of forty days has, over the years, tended to place greater emphasis upon the practice of doing good works. The whole legend of Santa Claus, for example, based upon the real person of St. Nicholas the Wonder-worker, is commonly depicted as a kind and charitable saint, who was a doer of good deeds, especially to the poor. Yet, without minimizing the discipline of fasting and prayer practiced during the season, fasting, we should understand, does not exclusively mean abstinence from foods. Fasting can also, and very possibly mean, the abstinence of the many other things that we have found ourselves "consuming:" **things** that we may have become possessive of, or very possibly attached to; even behavior that we have found ourselves compelled to do. The foolish rich man spoken of in today's Gospel is a good example. **He lacks an understanding of God as his Source and selfishly hoarded his goods.**

St. Gregory the Great addresses the fast in this way: *"...let no one believe that fasting alone is sufficient; for the Lord tells us by the mouth of the prophet, 'The kind of fasting I want is this: Remove the chains of oppression and the yoke of injustice, and let the oppressed go free.'* And then he continues, *'Share your food with the hungry and open your homes to the poor. Give clothes to those who have nothing to wear, and do not refuse to help your own relatives (Isaiah 58:6, 7). The Lord therefore blesses the fast that uplifts our hands in almsgiving before His eyes, which is joined to the love of our neighbor, and founded on compassion.'*

We live in a land that has prided itself upon freedoms that have provided each of us with countless opportunities for our every ambition. If either by working hard, such as our parents or grandparents did, some of whom were immigrants, or if it was our good fortune to become the inheritors of all that they achieved to make our life much easier, **our standard of living is largely spoken of in terms of our possessions.** And so the very words of our Lord Jesus Christ in the verse preceding today's lesson could not be more alarming: *"Watch out!"* He said, *"Be on your guard against all kinds of greed, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses"* (verse 15). The Lord then proceeds to present us with a parable that describes a successful man who defines his life in terms of what he possesses, and further, considers the purpose of his life in this world solely in terms of being a consumer. We hear the rich man in today's Gospel says to himself, "You have plenty of good things laid up for many years. Take

life easy; eat, drink and be merry” (verse 19). These words are part of the writings of the Old Testament author of Ecclesiastes. They are the very words that are also found in the prophesy of Isaiah. However in Isaiah, the phrase ends with the words: “...for tomorrow we die” (Isaiah 22:13). It is not mentioned in the quote because the Gospel lesson draws the same conclusion: the rich man’s life ends with death.

Today’s lesson is also a good study into the mind of the greedy. In commenting on the rich fool, St. Basil says: *His heart is tormented, devoured with anxiety. For what [others might rejoice in] brings pain to the [greedy]. [The rich man is not happy that] his storehouses are stuffed full. The overflowing riches which his storehouses are unable to hold are a torment to his soul, lest perhaps the overflow should bring some of their blessing to those in want!* The man in the parable is truly selfish, according to Basil.

Our Lord’s concludes the lesson of the parable with the warning: that possessing the rich man’s attitude and his way of thinking is foolish. Why? Because it would be more proper for one’s goal in life to be focused upon becoming “rich towards God” – the Giver of every gift, the Provider and Source of all things.

In last week’s Gospel lesson we heard our Lord say, *I desire mercy not sacrifice (Matthew 9:10)*. The man in today’s parable was neither merciful nor sacrificial. He considered his life blessed by having the ability to selfishly hoard his riches. He gave no thought to the fact that he would not be able to take any of his possessions with him to the grave. He was in fact, deluded in his thinking: perceiving himself rich, he was in fact very poor. Thinking of his wealth in terms of the abundance of his possessions, he gave no thought to what it meant to be “rich toward God”.

Prayer

O Christ our God, have mercy upon us sinners. O Holy Virgin, Mother of God, beneath your compassion we take refuge, despise not our prayer in our spiritual poverty, but by your intercessions, deliver us from all manner of greed, jealousy, pride and envy. O Holy Spirit of God, purify our hearts set aright our minds, and sanctify our souls that we may be found faithful stewards of all that has been entrusted to our care. Establish us in your will; grant that we may remain steadfast in our commitment and earnest in our desire to be rich towards God. For Thou art He who is a ready help to us in our time of need, and to Thee do we ascribe glory, together with the Father who is unoriginate, and our Lord, God, and Saviour Jesus Christ; for blessed art Thou unto ages of ages. A-men.

TWENTY-FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST
THE NINTH SUNDAY OF LUKE

THE HOLY MARTYR PLATO OF ANCYRA; MARTYR ROMANOS OF ANTIOCH;
MARTYRS ZACCHAEUS THE DEACON AND ALPHEAOS
THE READER OF CAESAREA IN PALESTINE

طروبارية القيامة على اللحن الثامن

انحدرت من العلوّ يا متحنن، وقبلت الدفنَ ذا الثلاثةِ الأيامِ، لكي تُعتقنا من الآلامِ، فيا
حياتنا وقيامتنا يا ربّ المجدُ لك.

طروبارية رؤساء الملائكة باللحن الرابع

أيها المتقدمون على الأجناد السماويين، نتوسّلُ إليكم نحن غير المستحقين، حتّى
أنكم بطلباتكم تكتنوفوننا بظلّ أجنحةِ مجدكم غير الهيولي، حافظين إيانا نحنُ
الجائين والصارخين بغير فتور، أنقذونا من الشدائد، بما أنكم رؤساء مراتبِ
القواتِ العلوية.

اليومَ الهيكلُ الذي للمُخلصِ، الكليّ النقاءِ، العذراءُ الخدُرُ ذو النمنّ الجزيلِ،
وهي الكنزُ الطاهرُ لمجدِ الإله، إذ تدخُلُ بيتَ الربِّ، تدخُلُ نعمةَ الروحِ الإلهيِّ
مَعها. فلنُسبِحها ملائكةُ الله، لأنّها المِظلةُ السّماوية.

الرسالة

صَلُّوا وَأَوْفُوا الرَّبَّ إِلَهَنَا

اللَّهُ مَعْرُوفٌ فِي أَرْضِ يَهُودَا

فَصَلِّ مِنْ رِسَالَةِ الْقَدِيسِ بُولَسِ الرَّسُولِ إِلَى أَهْلِ أَفَسُسِ

(4:1-7)

يا إخوة، أطلب إليكم أنا الأسير في الرب أن تسلكوا كما يحق للدعوة التي دعيتم بها* بكل تواضع ووداعة وبطول أناة، مُحتملين بعضكم بعضاً بالمحبة* ومُجتهدين في حفظ وحدّة الروح برباط السلام* فإنكم جسد واحد وروح واحد، كما دعيتم إلى رجاء دعوتكم الواحد* رب واحد وإيمان واحد ومعمودية واحدة* وإله، أب للجميع واحد، هو فوق الجميع وبالجميع وفي جميعكم* ولكل واحد منا أُعطيت النعمة على مقدار موهبة المسيح.

الإنجيل

فصل شريف من بشارة القديس لوقا

قال الرب هذا المثل: رجلٌ غني أخصبت أرضه، ففكر في نفسه قائلاً: ليس لي مكانٌ أُخزن فيه غلالِي، فماذا أعمل؟ ثم قال: أعملُ هذا: أهدمُ مخازني وابني أكبر منها، فأجمع فيها كلَّ غلالِي وخيراتي. وأقول لنفسِي: يا نفسُ، لك خيراتٌ كثيرةٌ تكفيك سنين كثيرة، فاستريحِي وكلي واشربي وتنعمي! فقال له الله: يا غبي، في هذه الليلة تُطلب نفسك منك. فهذا الذي أعددتَه لمن يكون؟ هكذا يكون مصيرُ من يدخرُ لنفسِهِ، ولا يغني بالله، ولما قال هذا نادى: من كان له أذنان تسمعان فليسمع!

ملاحظة بخصوص تناول القربان المقدس

إن مفهومنا لتناول القربان يعنى عمومية المشاركة فيه لذوى العقيدة الواحدة، الا إن المشاركة في سر القربان المقدس هنا مقتصر فقط على أعضاء الكنائس الارثوذكسية والذين يحضرون أنفسهم بالصلاة والصوم والاعتراف منذ فترة قريبة (وعلى كل حال، فإننا ندعو الجميع للمشاركة فى الخبز المقدس الذى يوزع عند إنتهاء مراسيم القداس). رجاء مراجعة الكاهن. إذا رغبت أن تصبح عضواً فى الكنيسة الارثوذكسية