

St. Michael Antiochian Orthodox Church of the San Fernando Valley
a Parish of the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America
16643 Vanowen Street; Van Nuys, California; 91406 **stmichaelvannuys.org**

His Eminence, Metropolitan JOSEPH, Archbishop of New York

and Metropolitan of all North America

www.antiochian.org

Archpriest Timothy Baclig, Pastor

frtimothy@stmichaelvannuys.org

Rev. Fr. Minas Sarchizian, Assisting Priest

fatherminas@gmail.com

Rev. Deacon Andrew Monsue

armcopper@gmail.com

Subdeacon Richard Tamoush

richard@aaaflag.com

Subdeacon Magued Wassef

wassefm@msn.com

Subdeacon Richard Ajalat, Pastoral Assistant

rajalat@stmichaelvannuys.com

Parish Council Chair - Michael Mitchell

mgmitchell3@gmail.com

Council Vice-Chair - Connie Abdun-Nur Barilla

cmatthews46@yahoo.com

Council Secretary - Eric Nelson

ericnelson2520@sbcglobal.net

Council Treasurer - Kris Thabit

kthabit66@hotmail.com

Antiochian Orthodox Christian Women of No. America (AOCWNA)

Chapter President - Charmaine Darmour

cdarmour@sbcglobal.net

Church Comptroller - Mary Ann Coury

maryanncoury@aol.com

Choir Director - Art Danks

artdanks1@yahoo.com

Church School Director - Lila Coudsy

lcoudsy@aol.com

Youth Director - Cooper Rowe

crowe31@gmail.com

Young Adult Director - Richard Ajalat

rajalat@stmichaelvannuys.org

Faithtree Resources Exec. Director - Michelle Moujaes

michelle@faithtree.org

Project Manager - Michael J. Malouf

michael@jacksonia.com

Stewardship Chair - Richard Tamoush

richard@AAAFLAG.COM

Capital Funds Campaign Chair - Ron Zraick

ronaldzraick@gmail.com

Property Management Chair - Eric Nelson

ericnelson2520@sbcglobal.net

Bookstore Manager - Bobbi Monsue

bobbi_monsue@att.net

50th Anniversary Co-Chair - Don Meena

donmeena@sbcglobal.net

Golf Classic Chair - Fred Milkie

milkief@aol.com

Webmaster - Dan Raju

dan.raju16@hotmail.com

Coffee Hour Coordinator - Cindy Tamoush

famtam5@socal.rr.com

Head Usher - Ramez Hage

jeddo.ramez@gmail.com

The Sunday of the Forefathers (Ancestors) of Christ

The Hieromartyr Eleutherios, Bishop of Illyria

The Martyr Anthia, mother of Eleutherios; Venerable Paul of Latra;
Stephen, bishop-confessor of Surozh; Venerable Tryphon of Pechenga

Sunday, December 15, 2019

Tone 1; Eothinon 4

Apolytikion for the Resurrection (Tone 4)

While the stone was sealed by the Jews, and the soldiers were guarding Thy most pure body, Thou didst arise on the third day, O Savior, granting life to the world. For which cause the heavenly powers cried aloud unto Thee, O giver of life. Glory to Thy Resurrection, O Christ, glory to Thy kingdom, glory to Thy providence, O Thou Who alone art the lover of mankind.

Apolytikion of the Holy Forefathers (Tone 2)

Thou hast justified by faith the ancient Forefathers, and through them Thou hast gone before and betrothed unto Thyself the Church of the Gentiles. Let the saints, therefore, take pride in glory; for from their seed sprouted forth a noble fruit, and she it was who gave birth to Thee without seed. Wherefore, by their pleadings, O Christ God, save our souls.

Apolytikion for St. Eleutherios of Illyria (Tone 5)

Being comely adorned in thy sacred priestly robes and newly drenched with the streams of thy pure and sanctified blood, thou didst soar aloft to stand before thy Master, Christ; hence never cease to intercede for those honoring with faith thy mighty and blessed contest, thou overthrower of Satan, O wise and blessed Eleutherios.

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 of the Preparation of Christ's Nativity (Tone 3)

On this day the Virgin cometh to the cave to give birth to God the Word ineffably, Who was before all the ages. Dance for joy, O earth, on hearing the gladsome tidings; with the Angels and the shepherds now glorify Him Who is willing to be gazed on * as a young Child Who before the ages is God.

Daily Readings

THE EPISTLE (for St. Eleutherios)

*Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saint.
What shall we render unto the Lord for all that He hath rendered unto us?*

The Reading from the Second Epistle of St. Paul to St. Timothy (1:8-18)

Timothy, my son, do not be ashamed then of testifying to our Lord, nor of me his prisoner, but share in suffering for the gospel in the power of God, Who saved us and called us with a holy calling, not in virtue of our works but in virtue of his own purpose and the grace which he gave us in Christ Jesus ages ago, and now has manifested through the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, Who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel. For this gospel I was appointed a preacher and apostle and teacher, and therefore I suffer as I do. But I am not ashamed, for I know Whom I have believed, and I am sure that He is able to guard until that Day what has been entrusted to me. Follow the pattern of the sound words which you have heard from me, in the faith and love which are in Christ Jesus; guard the truth that has been entrusted to you by the Holy Spirit Who dwells within us. You are aware that all who are in Asia turned away from me, and among them Phygelos and Hermogenes. May the Lord grant mercy to the household of Onesiphoros, for he often refreshed me; he was not ashamed of my chains, but when he arrived in Rome he searched for me eagerly and found me. May the Lord grant him to find mercy from the Lord on that Day and you well know all the service he rendered at Ephesus.

THE GOSPEL (for the Holy Forefathers)

The Reading of the Holy Gospel is according to St. Luke (14:16-24)

The Lord spoke this parable: "A man once gave a great banquet, and invited many; and at the time for the banquet he sent his servant to say to those who had been invited, 'Come; for all is now ready.' But, one by one, they all began to make excuses. The first said to him, 'I have

bought a field, and I must go out and see it; I pray you, have me excused.’ And another said, ‘I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to examine them; I pray you, have me excused.’ And another said, ‘I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.’ So the servant came and reported this to his master. Then the householder in anger said to his servant, ‘Go out quickly to the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in the poor and maimed and blind and lame.’ And the servant said, ‘Sir, what you commanded has been done, and still there is room.’ And the master said to the servant, ‘Go out to the highways and hedges, and compel people to come in, that my house may be filled. For I tell you, none of those men who were invited shall taste my banquet.’ For many are called, but few are chosen.”

The Synaxarion

On December 15 in the Holy Orthodox Church we commemorate the Venerable Paul of Latra; Stephen, bishop-confessor of Surozh; and Venerable Tryphon of Pechenga.

On this day, we also commemorate the contest of the holy Hieromartyr Eleutherios, Bishop of Illyria, and his mother, Saint Anthia.

Verses

Eleutherios, being by nature no servant,
gave no service to error on seeing the broadswords.

Blades on the fifteenth murdered Godlike Eleutherios and Anthia.

Anthia heard the Gospel from the great Apostle Paul himself, and was baptized by him. Being early left a widow, she entrusted her only son to the education and service of the Bishop of Rome, Anacietus. Seeing how greatly Eleutherios was gifted and illumined by the grace of God, the bishop ordained him as bishop of Illyria at age 20. This Godly man kept his flock like a good shepherd, adding to their number from day to day. In the year 120, Emperor Hadrian, a persecutor of Christians, sent a commander, Felix, with soldiers, to seize Eleutherios. Instead, Felix became a Christian, as did the Governor Choribus. They went back to the capitol where all three men were tortured and beheaded. As Anthia held the dead body of her son, she was also beheaded. Their bodies were taken to Valona in Albania, where Eleutherios glorifies the name of Christ to this day by many wonders.

On this day we celebrate the Sunday of the Holy Forefathers (Ancestors) of our Lord Jesus.

Verses

Receive joy, O Forefathers which lived aforetime,

As now ye behold at hand Christ the Messiah.

Be glad, O Abraham, for thou art shown to be the forefather of Christ.

We remember all the holy Patriarchs of the Old Testament who prefigured or foretold Christ: Adam the first Father, Enoch, Melchizedek, Abraham, the friend of God, Isaac, the fruit of the Promise, Jacob and the twelve patriarchs. We then commemorate those who lived under the Law: Moses, Aaron, Joshua, Samuel, David, and the Prophets: Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel; the twelve minor prophets; Elijah, Elisha, Zachariah, and John the Baptist; and finally the Virgin Mary, the intermediary between mankind and her divine Son. Indeed, the Lord Jesus did not come to abolish the Law and the Prophets, but to redeem humanity which bemoaned the weight of evil since Adam; to realize the promise made to Abraham; to change the Law of Fear into the Law of Love; and to give Resurrection and Life to mankind. This feast prepares us for the Nativity of Jesus Christ, placing before us the anticipation and hope for His coming among us.

By the intercessions of Thy Saints, O God, have mercy upon us. Amen.

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

Holy Bread is being offered by Father Minas, Presbytera Nicole and Mary with prayers for their family.

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

for the repose of the newly-departed Eugene Ferns +6 January, 2019
beloved mother of Christine Ferns Panga. Memory eternal.

for the continued recovery and good health of Richard Khoury.

for George Khouri and Gabriella Lewin on the occasion of their birthdays,
by their families, Carolyn Sadd, Chrisa Sadd, John & Carrie Khouri;
Leilah & Daniel Lewin.

May God grant them many happy and healthy years!

for the well being of Emil Bitar.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

December is “St. Ignatius Month” in the Antiochian Archdiocese

Members of the Order of St. Ignatius are assisting in the services this month. The ushers are: Fred Milkie, Charles Ajalat, Minnie Lush and Michael Malouf. Reading the epistle this morning is Constantine Nasr. For more information on The Order visit their website: www.orderofstignatius.org.

Teen SOYO Raffle

Tickets for our Annual Teen SOYO Holiday Raffle are available today for the drawing that will take place during our Church School Christmas Buffett Lunch. Proceeds from the raffle will help Teen SOYO sponsor the Special Olympics at the Antiochian Village and our St. Michael Teen Program. We thank everyone for their support.

Coming Soon!

A “Young Families Ministry” where parents with young children (ages 1-5) get to know each other, support each other in fellowship, worship and work together. Our first gathering will be on Sunday, January 5th. Save the date! More information to follow from Brittney Ajalat <blajalat@gmail.com>. Feel free to contact her with your ideas.

Write a Note to a Military Veteran

Frieda Kabbash will have Christmas cards available during the coffee hour today for your voluntary help in writing a personal message to our retired veterans. We would appreciate your support.

Lenten Buffet Lunch Following Today's Christmas Program

Join us for a Lenten lunch following today's Program. A free-will offering for the meal will be received to support our Church School curriculum.

Church School Recess

Church School will begin a recess following today's program. Classes will resume on January 5, 2020; the Pre-Feast of Holy Theophany.

Parish Council Officers Elected

We congratulate our newly-elected 2020 Parish Council Officers: Kris Thabit, Chair; Connie Barilla, Vice-Chair; John Khouri, Secretary; and Julie Bitar, Treasurer. We sincerely thank the Council members whose terms have expired: Carrie Sadd Khouri and Eric Nelson. Two of three Council members were appointed by the Chair and Pastor with the approval of the Council to serve a one-year term in the New Year. They are: Julie Bitar and Michael Mitchell.

For Planning Ahead

This year the Feast of the Holy Nativity (Christmas) falls on a Wednesday. The weekend of the The Sunday Before Christmas will include Vespers on Saturday, December 21st at 5 p.m., Orthros at 8:45 a.m. and Liturgy at 10 a.m. on Sunday, December 22nd. The Divine Liturgy of St. Basil for the Pre-Feast will be served following the Ninth Royal Hour, beginning at 3 p.m. on Tuesday, December 24th (Christmas Eve). The Festal Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom will be celebrated on Christmas Day (Wednesday), December 25th at 10 a.m., preceded by Orthros and the Christmas canon at 8:30 a.m.

Christmas Party on the Fifth Day of Christmas

A "Potluck" (no fast) Christmas Party is planned at the home of Alice Prewett and her son Scott on the Fifth Day of Christmas, Sunday, December 29th following the Divine Liturgy. It will be a great time of fellowship. Please RSVP to Father Timothy at your earliest convenience at: frtimothy@stmichaelvannuys.org

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 21st – Great Vespers, 5 p.m.

Sunday, December 22nd – 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

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

The Ninth Royal Hour, 3 p.m. Vespersal Divine Liturgy of St. Basil the Great* – 3:30 p.m.

Wednesday, 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)

Tuesday, December 31st (New Year’s Eve) – Great Vespers, 5 p.m.

with prayers for the New Year

Wednesday, 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 3rd - The Prayers of The Royal Hours, 6 a.m., 9 a.m., noon, and 3 p.m.

Saturday, January 4th - The Eve of Forefeast (*Paramon*) – [observed as a strict fast day]

Great Vespers of the Forefeast (*Paramon*), 5 p.m.

Sunday, January 5th - Orthros, 9 a.m., The Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom* 10 a.m. followed by the service of The Great Blessing of the Waters

Great Vespers of Holy Theophany, 5 p.m.

Monday, January 6th — Festal Orthros, 8:30 a.m. immediately followed by
The Festal Divine Liturgy

* *Services with Holy Communion*

Fall Food Collection

We are assisting a local food pantry ("Loaves and Fishes") in their new location in Van Nuys. Please phone Cindy Tamoush at: 818-345-4363 if you are able to participate in our Thanksgiving and/or Christmas food collection. Here are ways that you may choose to participate:

1. If you'd like me to shop for you, write a check out to: "St. Michael Church," earmarked: "Holiday Food Collection" (tax deductible)
2. You may purchase grocery script in any amount. Don't forget to use your Ralph's Reward Card that will help St. Michael benefit from your purchase.
3. Due to the lack of space, Loaves and Fishes is requested any of the following items: personal care items, deodorant soap, shampoo, toothbrushes, toothpaste, sanitary napkins and disposable razors, large disposable diapers, men and women's socks, bottled water, and any store gift cards in \$5 or \$10 denominations. Please do not provide us with clothing or household items.

All food items must be delivered to our church kitchen by next Sunday, December 22.

Thank you for your support,

Cindy Tamoush
Charity Coordinator

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

Holy Bread Offering List

Dec 22 - Ron & Kathy Zraick
Dec 24 and 25 - open
Dec 29 - the Srouer family
Jan 05 - (ForeFeast of Theophany) open
Jan 12 - open
Jan 19 - open

Coffee Hour Hosts Calendar

Dec 22 - the Meena family

Dec 29 - open
Jan 04 - reserved
Jan 12 - open
Jan 19 - open

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.



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

Teen Christmas Caroling Event - Saturday, December 21, 2019

Start time: 4:30 p.m., Vespers, 5 p.m., (\$20) includes dinner

[Parent Consent Form Needed] for chaperone carpool

Parents to pick up teens at 9 p.m. at the church

For more information contact Cooper Rowe, Youth Director at
crowe31@gmail.com

The Feast of the Holy Nativity (Christmas) - Wednesday, December 25
Christmas Eve Liturgy (Paramon), 3:30 p.m.; Christmas Day, 10 a.m.

St. Mark Men's Club New Year's Party - Tuesday, December 31, 2019

St. Mark Hall [17840 Sky Park Circle; Irvine; 92614] \$75/person,
\$45/under 15 occupying a seat (no babysitting); RSVP by 12/15

St. Nicholas Cathedral New Year's Eve Hafli - December 31, 2019

Doors open at 9 p.m., \$150/ticket; \$35/babysitting

A Day Retreat for Orthodox Moms - Saturday, January 11

at St. Luke Church (Garden Grove); Minimum donation: \$25

Speakers: Father Nicholas and Khourye Jan Speier

Annual Meeting of the Voting Membership - Sunday, January 26

Archdiocese Winter Sacred Music Institute - February 20-23; hosted by
St. Michael Church (Van Nuys, California)

Cathedral “Kicks Off” Debutante Ball Event Fundraising

St. Nicholas Cathedral is hosting the 57th “Sweetheart Ball,” scheduled for Saturday, April 25, 2020 at the Universal Hilton in Universal City. The event is being co-chaired by Rose Samore and Georgette Malouf. Some of our teens are participants in this biennial event. Program Book Sponsorships are being solicited and is a lovely way to honor our young women. The form is available on the narthex bulletin board. The deadline is February 21, 2020. Checks are payable to: “St. Nicholas Ladies Society.” Tickets for the event and more information is available by contacting: Tania Matar at 818-903-0953 or by e-mail at: <taniamatta@sbcglobal.net>.

Capital Funds Campaign Committee Recommends 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 60% 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.

Second: A Qualified Charitable Deduction (QCD) is an option for anyone 70.5 years of age or older. You are able to take advantage of withdrawing from your personal IRA (Individual Retirement Account) without paying Federal or State Taxes. This will give the donor an opportunity to fulfill their pledge. You would not be able to take a tax deduction on the donation, however, not having to pay Federal or State Taxes on the IRA withdrawal

far exceeds the benefit of a tax deduction. [Your IRA deduction cannot exceed \$100,000 per year.]

In both of the above options the funds would need to be transferred from either your Securities Brokerage Account or IRA Account directly to the St. Michael Antiochian Orthodox Church Brokerage Account in order for the donation to qualify.

Third: Many corporations provide their employees with a "Matching Funds Program" to the charity of their choice. The amount may vary with each company. We suggest that you check with the Human Resources Department or the Comptroller of the company where you are employed to see if such a program is being offered.

Finally: The IRS allows you to deduct state income tax and property tax on your federal income tax return to lower your tax bill. Before the tax laws changed, there was no limit to how much taxpayers could deduct for state and local taxes. Beginning in tax year 2018, the deduction has been capped at \$10,000 for all state and local income, property, and sales taxes combined.

By contrast, contributions to charitable organizations, including St. Michael Church, have a much higher limit -- they may be deducted up to 50% of a person's adjusted gross income. While we do not expect any parishioner to make a contribution of 50% of their adjusted gross income, the high deduction limit offers an attractive alternative to the \$10,000 cap on deductions for state and local income, property and sales taxes paid by parishioners. Please consider this tax benefit when planning your giving to the Church Building Fund.

St. Michael Church has benefited by all of the above from its members. For more information please speak with Ron Zraick, Chairman of the Capital Funds Campaign Committee <ronaldzraick@yahoo.com>.

**St. Michael Antiochian Orthodox Church
of the San Fernando Valley**

16643 Vanowen Street, Van Nuys, California 91406-4622

Metropolitan JOSEPH, Archbishop of New York and all North America

V. Rev. Timothy Baclig, Pastor
pastor@stmichaelvannuys.com

Church Telephone: 818/994-2313
www.stmichaelvannuys.com

*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)*

Dear Members of St. Michael,

We are soon approaching the end of the calendar year and our Parish Council is preparing to provide us with our 2020 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 takes place each year. Nor can we adequately pay for our ongoing property maintenance without the shared responsibility and the help of volunteers 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 parishioners who help to financially support the salaries and the operational costs of our church property.

We are again asking everyone to prayerfully consider making a reasonable annual financial pledge to our parish for the New Year. We have much to be thankful for, in this, our 50th Anniversary year as a parish. We look forward, by God's grace, for continued growth in the future. We are also very grateful for the commitments of those who have provided us with contributions to complete the construction of our new church sanctuary. We encourage others who have not done so to prayerfully consider doing the same. One of our goals is to remain debt free. The New Year will include the second phase of our project that includes completing the interior of our new temple. Additional information will be provided at our Annual Parish Meeting at the end of January.

May you and your family enjoy a blessed Thanksgiving holiday with God's continued blessings as we prepare to celebrate the Feast of our Lord's birth.

In Christ,

Subdeacon Richard Tamoush
Stewardship Chair

Frequently Asked Questions When Completing a Pledge Form

What is the reason for completing an annual parish Pledge Form?

Each year planning for budgeted receipts and expenditures are an important part of being responsible stewards of Christ's church. Some of our month-to-month expenses include: priest and staff salaries, utility and maintenance expenses, the payment of taxes on all investment (income) property (yes, churches do pay property taxes), and insurance. Moreover, it is not uncommon for these expenses increase each year. It is a goal of our Parish Council to meet these expenses with the contributions of our members. The Pastor does not receive stipends (monetary gifts) for house blessings, baptisms, weddings and funerals if a family is not enrolled as a regular contributor of the parish. The Pastor's living expenses and allowances are included the Annual Budget of the parish that will be presented at our Annual Meeting on January 26.

What is an annual "Fair Share Commitment?"

Each parish of the Antiochian Archdiocese pays 10% of its parish income to assist with the expenses of our bishops, Archdiocesan and Diocesan departments and programs. Over one-fourth of the Archdiocese budget is dedicated to youth programs. You can see two charts that provide the financial highlights of Archdiocese receipts and expenditures provided in our Annual Report booklet. The annual payment to the Archdiocese from St. Michael Church is currently: \$21,775 or 10% of our parish income (excluding contributions received for the Building Fund, charity collections, special Archdiocese collections, and memorial gifts). This money is collected from our parishioners from their first contribution to the church: \$50 for each adult and \$35 for each child (17 years of age or under) in a household. All additional funds pledged by our parishioners assist with the month-to-month expenses of the parish.

Our 2020 Pledge Form is provided in our church narthex.

The form may be completed and returned to the Church Office at: 16643 Vanowen Street; Van Nuys; California; 91406; or turned in on Sunday to Mary Ann Coury, Comptroller.

PASTORAL SERMON
The Eleventh Sunday of Luke – Sunday of the Forefathers
By V. Rev. Timothy Baclig
December 15, 2019

During the period from December 11-14, the church commemorates the Holy Forefathers of our Lord Jesus Christ. Today and next Sunday are the preparatory Sundays for the birth of Christ. Next Sunday we will remember the ancestors of Christ in the reading of our Lord's genealogy. Today we commemorate the Old Testament patriarchs, prophets and righteous men and women—the Holy Ancestors of our Christian faith. On both of these Sundays we are reminded of how God worked great signs and wonders through special men and women who responded to his call upon their lives. They were men and women with devotion, anticipating the coming of the Messiah.

Who were these men and women? According to the hymns heard yesterday and today we can hear the following names mentioned: First, persons of the earliest biblical period, some of which include: Adam, Abel, Seth, Noah, and Enoch. Second we hear of the patriarchs—Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Jacob's twelve sons who were also known as the twelve patriarchs. This is followed by women such as Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel, Miriam, Deborah, Esther, Ruth, Judith and others. Then come the prophets: Elijah, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Zechariah, Malachi, down to the last of the Old Testament prophets, John the Baptist. There are also special figures of the Old Testament that include: Melchizedek, Job, David and others. Then there is the three young men—Shadrach, Mishak, and Abednego who were rescued by God from Nebuchadnezzar's fiery furnace. These men and women were all known for their steadfast faith. Their lives reveal to us a lot about what it means to be committed, to honor God and shun idolatry, to be honest and truthful. They are examples of what it means to be righteous. They are our ancestors.

All too often, we are inclined to dismiss these ancestors as irrelevant pre-Christian Hebrews. The fact is they comprise an important part of our Christian heritage because their lives were lived in a manner that was totally dependent upon knowing God as an ever present reality. Their lives were not compartmentalized or secularized. They all lived with the very same needs that we know, but their day to

day choices were deeply rooted in a realization that one's life is not his own, and that our entire life is in the hand of God who is the Source of every blessing, and that we live in a fleeting moment of this created world.

In today's parable, the man who prepared the great banquet had invited many guests, as was the custom, and then *at the time of the banquet, he sent his servant to tell those who had been invited, 'Come, for everything is now ready'* (verses 16-17).

The first invitation, the Fathers of the Church say, was the centuries-long preparation of the Hebrew nation for the coming of the Messiah; the second was the Good News (the Gospel) that He had come. The image of a banquet is a figure of the feast of God's presence among His people, both in the Kingdom on earth—in the Church, which finds its fullest expression in the Eucharist—and in its fullness in the world to come.

In order to more fully understand the parable, it is important to understand that a relationship exists between the host of the banquet and the invited guests. In fact, the initial invitation implied this relationship.

We hear beginning with verse 18: *And they all alike [one by one] (or "with one consent") began to make excuses.* The word "consent" in the verse implies that the excuses were contrived; more accurately it means that the invited guests all-together, or all at once (in unison) made excuses. They demonstrate identical selfish preoccupation with personal matters that took precedence over everything. They could have arranged their affairs so that they could respond to the Lord's graciousness. Instead, they chose to not just decline from attending, but gave excuses. *The first said, 'I have just bought a field, and I must go and see it. Please excuse me.'* *Another said, 'I have just bought five yoke of oxen, and I'm on my way to try them out. Please excuse me.'* *Still another said, 'I just got married, so I can't come'* (verses 18-20).

All three rather contemptuously disregard the generosity of the host, who cares for them and values their friendship. Their responses might be paraphrased, "Oh, I intended to go, but something more important to me has come up." The three excuses expressed in the parable are meant to typify human concerns and priorities that, important as they may be in daily life, are nothing in comparison to God's love and

care. The invitation and the response illustrate man's neglect of what is of infinitely greater value to him—salvation and life eternal with God—than his earthly, perishable and temporal concerns.

We never enjoy obligations. Each of us would love to be a host. Where our relationship to God is concerned, none of us should have a sense of obligation or a feeling of having to do what we don't really want to do. God does not intend to force any one of us to do anything. But He really desires a relationship with us. One that He hopes we desire as well.

The Jewish people had been prepared for a final invitation by the events of their own history and by God's speaking to them through the prophets. But since the prophet's message it did not offer any improvement upon what mattered to them, they rejected their invitation. You may recall from the reading of the Gospel heard on Easter: *He came to that which was His own, but His own did not receive Him (John 1:11).*

In the continuation of today's Gospel lesson we are told that when the servant reported these things, *the owner of the house became very angry and ordered his servant to 'Go out quickly into the streets and alleys of the town and bring in the poor, the crippled, the blind and the lame' (verse 21).* The host began extending his invitation to outcasts: those in the "streets and alleys of the city." When the servant told him that this had been done and that there was still room, he ordered him to *go out to the roads and country lanes and make them (compel them) to come in* that the house might be filled (verse 23). And so, we learn from the parable that not only are those who were initially considered unworthy to be accepted as guests, but also even the Gentiles (all people) must be compelled to accept His invitation. The warning in verse 24—that *not one of those who were invited will get a taste of my banquet*—refers to the last judgment: those who have rejected God's grace will have no part in His Kingdom.

In conclusion, the Church does not give us this lesson from the Gospel in order that we may despise the Jewish people for their rejection, but for our own instruction, so that we may not fall into the same error. Christians are the new people of God, the New Israel, and have learned that they must seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness (Matthew 6:33). We, however, can be guilty of the same rejection in

many ways. We often place our physical health before our spiritual health, worldly learning before the knowledge of God, future material security before preparation for eternal life. And we, like the Jews of old, fashion our righteousness to suit our priorities. There is perhaps no better way to summarize this parable's meaning for us than to remember that we too can be replaced.

The Gospel concludes with the verse with the commentary: *Many are called but few are chosen (Matthew 22:14)*. Being the "chosen" is contingent upon our identification with God by the sincerity of obedience. Everyone is called, however, not all respond in the same way. The notion that God would discriminate and choose, or that He would favor a particular race over another, is totally preposterous.

Hear the words of the Apostle to the Hebrews: *We must pay more careful attention, therefore, to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away. For if the message spoken by angels was binding, and every violation and disobedience received its just punishment, how shall we escape, if we ignore such a great salvation? (Hebrews 2:1-3)*.

In terms of today's Gospel lesson, you and I can also very easily find excuses to avoid our Lord's banquet. Let us not ignore this sacred banquet prepared for us with excuses or replace it with any earthly banquet. It would be easy for us to simply explain how the Jews were those who denied Christ without seeing the ways that we could also deny Him as the Lord of our life.

Prayer

O Lord Jesus Christ our God, who is the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; the fulfillment of the Law and the Prophets, grant us courage in obedience that we may truly be the inheritors and heirs of your Kingdom. Keep us ever in your watchful care and protect us from the Evil One, for blessed art Thou unto ages of ages. A-men.

Sunday of Forefathers (Ancestors) of Christ

Hieromartyr Eleutherios, Bishop of Illyria

Martyr Anthia, mother of Eleutherios; Venerable Paul of Latra;

Stephen, bishop-confessor of Surozh; Venerable Tryphon of Pechenga

طروبارية القيامة على اللحن الأول

إِنَّ الْحَجَرَ لَمَّا خُتِمَ مِنَ الْيَهُودِ، وَجَسَدَكَ الطَّاهِرَ حُفِظَ مِنَ الْجَنْدِ، قُمْتَ فِي الْيَوْمِ الثَّالِثِ أَيَّهَا
الْمَخْلُصُ، مَانِحاً الْعَالَمَ الْحَيَاةَ. فَلِذَلِكَ قَوَاتُ السَّمَاوَاتِ هَتَفُوا إِلَيْكَ يَا وَاهِبَ الْحَيَاةِ: الْمَجْدُ
لِقِيَامَتِكَ أَيُّهَا الْمَسِيحُ، الْمَجْدُ لِمَلِكِكَ، الْمَجْدُ لَتَدْبِيرِكَ يَا مُحَبِّ الْبَشَرِ وَحَدِّكَ

طروبارية الأجداد على اللحن الثاني

قَدْ زَكَيْتَ بِالْإِيمَانِ الْآبَاءَ الْقَدَمَاءَ، وَبِهِمْ سَبَقْتَ فَخَطَبْتَ الْكَنِيسَةَ الَّتِي مِنَ الْأُمَمِ، فَلِيفْتَخِرِ
الْقَدِيسُونَ بِالْمَجْدِ، لِأَنَّ مِنْ زَرْعِهِمْ أَيْنَعُ ثَمَرٌ حَسِيبٌ، وَهُوَ الْأُمُّ الَّتِي وَلَدَتْكَ بَغِيرِ زَرْعٍ،
فَبِتَوَسَّلَاتِهِمْ أَيُّهَا الْمَسِيحُ الْإِلَهُ خَلَّصَ نَفُوسَنَا!

شَارِكْتَ الرُّسُلَ فِي أَخْلَاقِهِمْ، وَخَلَفْتَهُمْ عَلَى كِرَاسِيهِمْ. فَوَجَدْتَ الْعَمَلَ مَرْقَاةً إِلَى رُؤْيَا الْإِلَهِيَّاتِ،
يَا مُلْهِمًا مِنَ اللَّهِ. لِذَلِكَ فَصَلَّتْ بِأَحْكَامِ كَلِمَةِ الْحَقِّ، وَجَاهَدَتْ عَنِ الْإِيمَانِ حَتَّى الدَّمِّ، يَا الْفَتْرِيُوسُ
الشَّهِيدُ فِي رُؤْسَاءِ الْكَهَنَةِ. فَتَشَفَّعْ إِلَى الْمَسِيحِ الْإِلَهُ، فِي خَلَاصِ نَفُوسِنَا

طروبارية رؤساء الملائكة باللحن الرابع

أَيُّهَا الْمُتَقَدِّمُونَ عَلَى الْأَجْنَادِ السَّمَاوِيِّينَ، نَتَوَسَّلُ إِلَيْكُمْ نَحْنُ غَيْرِ الْمُسْتَحَقِّينَ، حَتَّى أَنْكُمْ
بَطْلِبَاتِكُمْ تَكْتَنُوفُونَا بِظُلِّ أَجْنَحَةِ مَجْدِكُمْ غَيْرِ الْهَيُولِيِّ، حَافِظِينَ إِيَّانَا نَحْنُ الْجَائِينَ
وَالصَّارِحِينَ بَغَيْرِ فِتُورٍ، أَنْقَذُونَا مِنَ الشَّدَائِدِ، بِمَا أَنْكُمْ رُؤَسَاءُ مَرَاتِبِ الْقَوَاتِ الْعُلُويَّةِ.

قنداق مقدمة الميلاد على اللحن الثالث

الْيَوْمَ الْعِذْرَاءُ تَأْتِي إِلَى الْمَغَارَةِ، لَتَلِدَ الْكَلِمَةَ الَّتِي قَبْلَ الدَّهْوَرِ، وَلَادَةً لَا تُفَسَّرُ، وَلَا
يُنْطَقُ بِهَا، فَافْرَحِي أَيَّتُهَا الْمَسْكُونَةُ إِذَا سَمِعْتَ، وَمَجْدِي مَعَ الْمَلَائِكَةِ وَالرَّعَاةِ الظَّاهِرِ
بِمُسْنَتِهِ طِفْلاً جَدِيداً، وَهُوَ الْإِلَهُ قَبْلَ الدَّهْوَرِ.

الرسالة

بَارَهُ مَوْتُ الرَّبِّ يَدَيَّ بَيْنَ كَرِيمٍ

أَعْطَانَا؟ مَا كُلُّ عَنِ الرَّبِّ نِكَافِيٍّ بِمَاذَا

تيموثاوس إلى الثانية الرسول بولس القديس رسالة من فصل

(1:8-18)

فِي اشْتَرَكِ بَلِّ، إِسِيرُهُ إِنَّا بِي وَلَا، رَبَّنَا بِشَهَادَةٍ تَخَجَّلُ لَا، تيموثاوس وَلَدِي يَا
دَعْوَةً وَدَعَانَا خَلَصْنَا الَّذِي، اللَّهُ قُوَّةً بِحَسَبِ الْإِنْجِيلِ لِأَجْلِ الْمَشَقَّاتِ احْتِمَالِ
لَنَا أُعْطِيَتْ الَّتِي وَالنَّعْمَةُ الْقَصْدُ يَمُقْتَضِي بَلِّ، أَعْمَالَنَا بِمُقْتَضَى لَا، مُقَدَّسَهُ
مُخْلَصْنَا بِظُهُورِ الْآنَ أَظْهَرَتْ وَإِنَّمَا، الْأَزَلِيَّةِ الْأَزْمِنَةِ قَبْلُ يَسُوعُ الْمَسِيحِ فِي
الَّذِي. الْإِنْجِيلِ بِوَاسِطَةِ وَالْخُلُودِ الْحَيَاةِ وَأَنَارَ الْمَوْتِ أَبْطَلَ الَّذِي، الْمَسِيحِ يَسُوعُ
الْأُمُورِ هَذِهِ احْتِمَالِ السَّبَبِ لِهَذَا. لِلْأَمَمِ وَمُعَلِّمًا وَرَسُولًا كَارِزًا لَهُ أَنَا جُعِلْتُ
يَحْفَظُ أَنْ قَادِرٌ أَنَّهُ وَمَوْقِنٌ، أَمَنْتُ بِمَنْ عَالِمٍ لَأَنْبِي، أَجْجَلُ لَسْتُ لِكُنِّي. أَيْضًا
فِي، مِنْ سَمِعْتُهُ الَّذِي الصَّحِيحِ الْكَلَامِ بِصُورَةٍ تَمَسُّكَ. الْيَوْمَ ذَلِكَ إِلَى وَدِيعَتِي
الْقُدُّوسِ بِالرُّوحِ الصَّالِحَةِ الْوَدِيعَةِ أَحْفَظُ. يَسُوعُ الْمَسِيحِ فِي الَّتِي وَالْمَحَبَّةِ الْإِيمَانِ
مَنْهُمْ الَّذِينَ، عَنِي ارْتَدُّوا أَسِيًّا فِي الَّذِينَ جَمِيعٌ أَنَّ هَذَا تَعْلَمُ أَنْتَ. فِينَا السَّاكِنِ
كَثِيرَةً مَرَارًا لِأَنَّهُ، أَنْيْسِيفُورُسُ لِبَيْتِ رَحْمَةِ الرَّبِّ لِيُعْطِ. وَهَرْمُوجَانِسُ فَيَجْلِسُ
اجْتِهَادَ بِأَوْفَرِ طَلِبَتِي، رُومِيَّةٌ فِي كَانَ لَمَّا بَلِّ، بِسِلْسِلَتِي يَخْجَلُ وَلَمْ أَرَا حَنِي
يَخْدِمُ كَانَ مَا وَكُلَّ. الْيَوْمَ ذَلِكَ فِي الرَّبِّ مِنْ رَحْمَةٍ يَجِدُ أَنَّ الرَّبَّ لِيُعْطِهِ. فَوَجَدَنِي
جَيِّدًا تَعْرِفُهُ أَنْتَ أَفْسُسَ فِي

الإنجيل

فصل شريف من بشارة القديس لوقا

قال الربُّ هذا المثل: «أَقَامَ رَجُلٌ وَلِيمَةً كَبِيرَةً، وَدَعَا إِلَيْهَا كَثِيرًا مِنَ النَّاسِ. ثُمَّ أَرْسَلَ
خَادِمَهُ سَاعَةَ الْوَلِيمَةِ يَقُولُ لِلْمَدْعُوعِينَ: تَعَالَوْا، فَكُلُّ شَيْءٍ مُهَيَّأٌ! فَاعْتَذَرُوا كُلُّهُمْ. قَالَ لَهُ
الْأَوَّلُ: أَشْتَرَيْتُ حَقْلًا وَيَجِبُ أَنْ أَذْهَبَ لَأَرَاهُ، أَرْجُو مِنْكَ أَنْ تَعُذَّرَنِي. وَقَالَ آخَرُ: أَشْتَرَيْتُ

خَمْسَةَ فِدَادِينَ، وَأَنَا الْآنَ ذَاهِبٌ لِأَجْرَبَهَا، أَرْجُو مِنْكَ أَنْ تَعْذُرَنِي. وَقَالَ آخَرُ: تَزَوَّجْتُ
أَمْرَأَةً، فَلَا أَقْدِرُ أَنْ أَجِيءَ. فَرَجَعَ الْخَادِمُ إِلَى سَيِّدِهِ وَأَخْبَرَهُ بِمَا جَرَى، فَغَضِبَ رَبُّ الْبَيْتِ
وَقَالَ لِخَادِمِهِ: أَخْرِجْ مُسْرِعًا إِلَى شَوَارِعِ الْمَدِينَةِ وَأَزِقَّتِهَا وَأَدْخِلِ الْفُقَرَاءَ وَالْمُشَوَّهِينَ
وَالْعُرْجَ وَالْعُمِيَّانَ إِلَى هُنَا. فَقَالَ الْخَادِمُ: جَرَى مَا أَمَرْتَ بِهِ يَا سَيِّدِي، وَبَقِيَتْ مَقَاعِدُ
فَارِغَةً. فَأَجَابَهُ السَيِّدُ: أَخْرِجْ إِلَى الطُّرُقَاتِ وَالدُّرُوبِ وَالزِّمِ النَّاسَ بِالْدُّخُولِ حَتَّى يَمْتَلِئَ
بَيْتِي. أَقُولُ لَكُمْ: لَنْ يَذُوقَ عِشَائِي أَحَدٌ مِنْ أُولَئِكَ الْمَدْعُوعِينَ، لَأَنَّ الْمَدْعُوعِينَ كَثِيرُونَ،
وَالْمَخْتَارِينَ قَلِيلُونَ!

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