

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
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Council Secretary - John Khouri johngkhouri@gmail.com
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The Sunday of the Forefathers (Ancestors) of Christ and Spyridon, Bishop of Trimythos, the Wonderworker

John, Metropolitan of Zichnon; Hieromartyr Alexander, Archbishop of Jerusalem

Sunday, December 12, 2021

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 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 of St. Spyridon (Tone 1)

Thou wast shown forth as a champion of the First Council and a wonderworker, O Spyridon, our God-bearing Father. Wherefore, thou didst speak unto one dead in the grave, and didst change a serpent to gold. And while chanting thy holy prayers, thou hadst Angels serving with thee, O most sacred one. Glory to Him that hath glorified thee. Glory to Him that hath crowned thee. Glory to Him that worketh healings for all through 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 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. Spyridon)

The saints shall boast in glory. Sing unto the Lord a new song.

The Reading from the Second Epistle of St. Paul to the Ephesians (5:8-19)

Brethren, walk as children of light—for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth—proving what is acceptable to the Lord; and have no communion with the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them; for it is a shame even to speak of the things which they do in secret. But all things when they are exposed are made manifest by the light, for everything that is made manifest is light. Therefore, he says: “Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine upon thee.” See then that you walk circumspectly, not as unwise, but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Therefore, do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit; speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and chanting in your heart to the Lord.

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 12 in the Holy Orthodox Church, we commemorate John, metropolitan of Zichnon; and Hieromartyr Alexander, Archbishop of Jerusalem.

On this day, we commemorate our righteous Father Spyridon the Wonderworker, Bishop of Trimythous in Cyprus.

Verses

Though Spyridon hath died, that worker of wonders,
Ye he hath not ceased from working still more wonders.
On the twelfth, Spyridon departed this life.

Spyridon was of simple farming stock, and remained simple and humble to the end of his days. He married young and had children, but, when his wife died, he devoted himself entirely to the service of God. When he became Bishop of Trimythous, Spyridon did not change his simple style of life, taking charge of his cattle himself and tilling his own land. He consumed very little of his own produce, giving the greater part to the poor. Spyridon performed great wonders by God’s power, making rain fall in a drought, stopping the course of a river, raising several of the dead, healing the Emperor Constans of a grave sickness, seeing and hearing angels, foreseeing future events and penetrating the secrets of the human heart. Spyridon was present at the first Ecumenical Council in Nicaea in 325, and, by his simple and clear expositions of the Faith, as well as by convincing miracles, brought back many heretics to Orthodoxy. He entered into rest in the Lord in 348, and his wonderworking relics now lie on the island of Corfu.

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.

OFFERINGS

Holy Bread is being offered by Ron & Kathy Zraick for the five-year memorial of Protosyngelos Paul Doyle (+17 December, 2016) of blessed memory and eternal repose. Memory eternal.

Holy Bread is also being offered for the one-year memorial of the servant of God, Odette George (+16 December, 2020), by her family: Jimmy, Tessa and Luke George, Suzanne and Denise George. Memory eternal.

Holy Bread is being offered by Mimi & Nichola Hallak and family in loving memory of Claire Azzam (+12 December, 2017), beloved mother, mother-in-law and grandmother, and Bassem Azzam (+30 November, 2018), beloved brother, brother-in-law and uncle. Memory eternal. Prayers are also offered for the continued health of the Azzam and Hallak family.

The Coffee Hour being hosted this morning by Rami & Basma Madain and prayers are being offered for their family. In the event of rain we will gather in the new church that will be open to view the new iconography.

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

for the continued health of Marcia Terry.

for the repose of the newly-departed servant of God, Emily Apostolou (+7 December, 2021), beloved wife of John Apostolou, mother and grandmother. Memory eternal.

for Ron & Kathy Zraick, celebrating their 63rd wedding anniversary (December 17th). May God grant them many years!

by Salim El-Darzi, Marwan, Maya & Alexander Ghantous in loving memory of Laila El-Darzi (+8 December, 2015). Memory eternal.

for the recovery and good health of Amira Boutari who recently celebrated her birthday (December 11). May God grant her many years!

by the Chala and O'Dea families for the speedy recovery and good health of the Archpriest, Nicholas Neyman.

for the one-year memorial of the servant of God, Vadni Beyrouti (+9 December, 2020), beloved grandmother of Lauren Baba. Memory eternal.

for the repose of the one-year memorial of the servant of God, Adele Turk (+7 December, 2020) beloved grandmother of Juliana Turk Tannous. Memory eternal.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

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

Members of the Order of St. Ignatius are assisting in the services this month. Reading the epistle this morning is: Tanya Milkie.

Our Weekly Bible Study Will Resume in January 2022

Recorded links of the study are available upon request.

Teen SOYO Raffle

Additional tickets for our Annual Teen SOYO Raffle will be available today for the drawing that will take place today. Thank you for your support.

Note to Coffee Hour hosts: Please contact Father Timothy for Instructions.

Holy Bread Offering List

Dec 19 - Phyllis Grates
Dec 24, 25, 26 - open
Jan 01, 02 - open

Coffee Hour Hosts Calendar

Church School Family Lunch

Please contact Fr. Timothy (818/219-3761; frtimothy@stmichaelvannuys.org)
to sign-up to offer Holy Bread.

Upcoming Events

Second Installation of Church Iconography

December 6-15; December 27 to January 8

St. Michael Church School Christmas Program and Family Lunch

Sunday, December 19, 2021; Please contact Debi Malouf to contribute,
make sweets or help serve: debisdodds@gmail.com

Teen SOYO Holiday Movie Night - Tuesday, December 28; 6 p.m.
St. Nicholas Cathedral; register at: <https://tinyurl.com/SOYO-ELF>

Annual Meeting of the Voting Membership (Virtual and In-person)

Sunday, January 30, following the Divine Liturgy

St. Michael 30th Golf Classic: Monday, May 23, 2022 at
Wood Ranch Golf Club (Simi Valley)

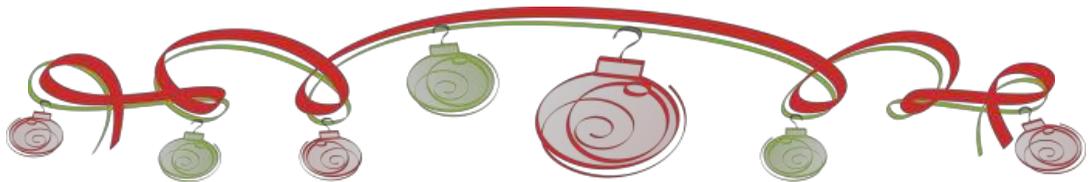
<www.woodranchgc.com>

Bookstore Orders Available on Parish Website

Place an order through our parish website or e-mail Bobbi Monsue (Manager) for special orders at: bobbi_monsue@att.net. Your credit card will also be accepted for payment. Please come in and browse through our expanding selection of new books, icons and special Christmas gift ideas. Special orders may also be made by request. A new book soon to arrive is: *Syria Crucified: Stories of Modern Martyrdom in an Ancient Christian Land*.



The toys will be donated to the Watts Empowerment Center. They will be hosting a toy give away on December 18th. If you are interested in volunteering to help, please contact Brittney at: 818-434-3558.



YOU ARE ALL INVITED TO OUR PRESENTATION OF

THE BIRTH OF CHRIST



December 19th, 2021
Immediately following Liturgy

Come and see our short presentation of The Birth of Christ featuring our Church School students and some of our Parents as main Characters

A LENTEN LUNCH WILL FOLLOW WITH A VISITOR FROM YOU KNOW WHO (SANTA) DURING THE LUNCHEON

Anyone wanting to contribute, make sweets or help serve, contact Debi Dodds 818.489.0635, debisdodds@gmail.com

ATTN: PARENTS = Students will be fitted in costume on Dec 5th & 12th during Church School. Parents are encourage to also participate

For more info, contact Lila Coudsy- 818.257.2030 lcoudsy@aol.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

Dear Parishioners & Friends of St. Michael,

St. Michael continues to support Loaves & Fishes, a local pantry serving the impoverished areas in Van Nuys and throughout the San Fernando Valley areas. Please phone 818-345-4363 should you be able to participate in our Thanksgiving and/or Christmas food collection. There are a few ways in participating:

1. If you would like me to shop for you, just write a check made out to "St. Michael Church," earmarked "Holiday Food Collection" (a tax incentive).
2. If you are doing your own shopping at Ralph's or Food-4-Less stores, don't forget to use your Ralphs Reward Card to help St. Michael Church to benefit.
3. Loaves and Fishes is also in need of the following: Personal care items including, deodorant, soap, shampoo, toothbrushes, toothpaste, sanitary napkins and disposable razors; baby items such as diapers, 5T Pull-Ups or larger, and baby formula; bottled water, canned food items (preferably with pull-up tabs), i.e., tuna, chicken, baked beans, fruit, vegetables, chili, soups, pasta/ravioli, peanut butter, Ensure, Carnation Instant Breakfast, coffee, tea; also any store gift cards in \$5 and \$10; clothing and household items.

All food items must be delivered to our Community Center Narthex by Sunday December 19th. A cart marked Food Collection will be placed in the kitchen for your donations.

Thank you for your continued support.

Yours in Christ,

Cindy Tamoush

**St. Michael Antiochian Orthodox Church
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Metropolitan JOSEPH, Archbishop of New York and all North America

V. Rev. Timothy Baclig, Pastor
frtimothy@stmichaelvannuys.org

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

*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 rapidly approaching the end of the calendar year and our Parish Council is preparing to provide us with our 2022 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 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. We are anticipating the completion of the church in the New Year. Additional information will be provided at our Annual Parish Meeting at the end of January.

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

In Christ,

Subdeacon Richard Tamoush
Stewardship Chair

St. Michael Antiochian Orthodox Church
16643 Vanowen Street, Van Nuys, CA 91406 Phone: 818-994-2313
Website: www.stmichaelvannuys.org

2022 CHRISTIAN STEWARDSHIP COMMITMENT FORM

- 1. All enrolled members must first fulfill a fair share contribution that is paid 100% by St. Michael Church to the Archdiocese annually (this does not include your family pledge obligation BELOW).**

Total number of baptized Orthodox persons (age 18 & above) in your household _____ \$50 each _____

Total number of baptized Orthodox persons (age 17 & under) in your household _____ \$35 each _____

(Please print all names with information in the section below)

- 2. In gratitude of God's blessings, I / we pledge to contribute St. Michael Church expenses.**

A total annual amount of: ____ (see Treasure self-assessment chart)

\$ _____ weekly \$ _____ monthly \$ _____ quarterly \$ _____ semi-annually \$ _____ annually

Name _____ Spouse Name _____

Phone number _____ E-mail Address _____

Address _____ City _____ State _____ Zip _____

- 3. How do you wish to pay? We accept personal checks or credit card payments. (See below)**

- a. You may write a check to "St. Michael Church" and mail it to the Church Office. (see address above)
- b. You may process an "automatic bill pay" with your bank that will mail a recurring monthly hard-copy earmarked check to St. Michael Church.
- c. You may pay by credit card using our website donation page (a 3% processing fee will apply) at: <https://www.stmichaelvannuys.org/donate/> and we will be immediately notified.
- d. You may arrange for a recurring monthly automatic withdrawal from your bank account using our church bank routing number and bank account.

Note: Each donation to St. Michael Church should be earmarked, i.e., "Building Fund," "Pledge," etc.

Print names of baptized Orthodox persons in your household.

Name

Age

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 30th.

Our 2022 Pledge Form is provided with this bulletin and available on our parish website.

The form may be completed and returned to the Church Office at: 16643 Vanowen Street; Van Nuys; California; 91406; or placed in the narthex offering box. Thank you for your continued support of our parish.

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.

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>.

Establishing a Prayer Discipline

Have you ever found praying to be difficult? Do you feel too busy to pray? Or perhaps you don't know where to begin? Maybe you have found it hard to focus, or even experienced emptiness when you pray. If so, you're not alone. For many Orthodox Christians, prayer can be misunderstood, or even frustrating. But prayer is how we build an intimate relationship with the living God! The reality is that cultivating that relationship takes time and effort. Our parish is partnering with Faithtree Resources in *The Encounter*, a prayer initiative that will help us grow closer to God, closer to each other, and to grow in our faith.

Made up of daily Orthodox prayers that you can utilize on a free app, or through a physical prayer book, *The Encounter* is a simple and easy way to begin to grow in your prayer life and do so with others in our community.

If you'd like more information about participating, sign up on the google doc here: tinyurl.com/encounterfaithtree [Your fellow parishioner, Elizabeth Waters]

SCHEDULE OF FESTAL SERVICES

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

[All Services are Live-streamed]

The Sunday before The Holy Nativity

“The Sunday of the Genealogy”

Saturday, December 18th – Great Vespers, 5 p.m.

Sunday, December 19th – Orthros, 8:30 a.m., Divine Liturgy,* 10 a.m.

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

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

The Great (“Royal”) Hours and Typika, 6 a.m., 9 a.m., noon

The Ninth Royal Hour, 2:30 p.m. Vesperal Divine Liturgy of St. Basil the Great* – 3 p.m.

Saturday, 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 Synaxis of the Most Holy Theotokos

The Sunday after The Holy Nativity

Saturday, December 25th – Great Vespers, 5 p.m.

Sunday, December 26th – Orthros, 8:45 a.m.; Divine Liturgy,* 10 a.m.

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

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

Saturday, 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)

Wednesday, January 5th - The Eve (*Paramon*)

The Great and Royal Hours, 6 a.m., 9 a.m., noon

The Ninth Royal Hour, 2:30 p.m. Vesperal Divine Liturgy of St. Basil the Great* – 3 p.m.

Thursday, January 6th — Festal Orthros, 8:30 a.m. immediately followed by
The Festal Divine Liturgy* and the Great Blessing of the Waters

** Services with Holy Communion*

PASTORAL SERMON

The Eleventh Sunday of Luke – Sunday of the Forefathers

By V. Rev. Timothy Baclig

December 12, 2021

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 recognize 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 speak of others who denied Christ without seeing the ways that we ourselves could also deny Him as the Lord of our life.

Prayer

O Lord Jesus Christ our God, 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 with Thine eternal Father and Thine All-Holy good, and life-giving Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

EOTHINON 3

الايوثينا 3

-tone 8

اللحن 8

**SUNDAY OF FOREFATHERS (ANCESTORS) OF CHRIST
AND SPYRIDON, BISHOP OF TRIMYTHOUS, THE WONDERWORKER**
JOHN, METROPOLITAN OF ZICHNON; HIEROMARTYR ALEXANDER, ARCHBISHOP OF JERUSALEM

طروبارية القيامة على اللحن الثامن

انحدرت من العلويًا متحنن، وقبلت الدفنَ ذا الثلاثة الأيام، لكي تُعْتَقْنَا من الآلام، فيا حياتنا وقيامتنا يا ربَّ المجدُّ لك.

طروبارية الأجداد على اللحن الثاني

قد زكيت بالإيمان الآباء القدماء، وبهم سبقتَ فخطبت الكنيسة التي من الأمم، فليفتخر القديسون بالمدِّ، لأنَّ من زرعهم أينع ثمرٌ حسيبٌ، وهو الأمُّ التي ولدتك بغير زرع، فبتوسلاتهم أيها المسيح الإله خلَّص نفوسنا!

أيُّها الأبُّ البارُّ هرمن، الناسكُ في البراري الشماليَّةِ و المتشفِّعُ الرؤوفُ لِكُلِّ العالم، مُعلِّمُ الإيمانِ القويمِ و المرشدُ للتقوى، زينةُ ألاسكا و فرحُ كلِّ أميركا، تشفِّعْ إلى المسيح الإلهِ في خلاصِ نفوسنا.

طروبارية رؤساء الملائكة بالحن الرابع

أَيُّهَا الْمُتَقَدِّمُونَ عَلَى الْأَجْنَادِ السَّمَاوِيِّينَ، نَتَوَسَّلُ إِلَيْكُمْ نَحْنُ غَيْرَ الْمُسْتَحَقِّينَ، حَتَّى أَنْتُمْ بِطَلْبَاتِكُمْ تَكْتَنِفُونَنَا بِظِلِّ أجنحةِ مجدِّكم غيرِ الهيولي، حَافِظِينَ إِيَّانَا نَحْنُ الْجَائِثِينَ وَالصَّارِحِينَ بِغَيْرِ فِتْوَرٍ، أَنْفَقْنَا مِنَ الشَّدَائِدِ، بِمَا أَنْتُمْ رُؤَسَاءُ مَرَاتِبِ الْقَوَاتِ الْعُلُويَّةِ.

قنداق تقدمة الميلاد على اللحن الثالث

اليوم العذراء تأتي إلى المغارة، لتلد الكلمة الذي قبل الدهور، ولادة لا تُفسَّر، ولا يُنطقُ بها، فافرحي أيتها المسكونة إذا سمعتي، ومجدي مع الملائكة والرعاة، الظاهر بمسنته طفلاً جديداً، وهو الإله قبل الدهور.

الرسالة

يفتخر الأبرار بالمجد. رنموا للرب ترنيمة جديدة.

فصل من رسالة القديس بولس الرسول إلى أهل أفسس.

يَا إِخْوَةَ، اسْلُكُوا كَأَوْلَادٍ لِلنُّورِ - فَإِنَّ ثَمَرَ الرُّوحِ هُوَ فِي كُلِّ صَلَاحٍ وَبِرٍّ وَحَقٍّ - مُخْتَبِرِينَ مَا هُوَ مَرَضِي لَدَى الرَّبِّ وَلَا تَشْتَرِكُوا فِي أَعْمَالِ الظُّلْمَةِ غَيْرِ الثَّمَرَةِ، بَلْ بِالْأُخْرَى وَبِخَوِ عَلَيْهَا. فَإِنَّ الْأَفْعَالَ الَّتِي يَفْعَلُونَهَا سِرًّا، يَقْبَحُ ذِكْرُهَا أَيْضًا لَكِنْ كُلُّ مَا يُوبَّخُ عَلَيْهِ، يُعْلَنُ بِالنُّورِ فَإِنَّ كُلَّ مَا يُعْلَنُ هُوَ نُورٌ وَلِذَلِكَ يَقُولُ: اسْتَيْقِظْ أَيُّهَا النَّائِمُ وَقُمْ مِنْ بَيْنِ الْأَمْوَاتِ، فَيُبْضِي لَكَ الْمَسِيحُ. فَانظُرُوا إِذَنْ أَنْ تَسْلُكُوا بِحَذَرٍ، لَا كَجُهَلَاءَ، بَلْ كَحُكَمَاءَ، مُفْتَدِينَ الْوَقْتَ فَإِنَّ الْأَيَّامَ شَرِيرَةٌ. فَلِذَلِكَ لَا تَكُونُوا أَعْيَاءَ، بَلْ افْهَمُوا مَا مَشِيئَةُ الرَّبِّ. وَلَا تَسْكُرُوا بِالخَمْرِ الَّتِي فِيهَا الدُّعَارَةُ، بَلْ امْتَلِئُوا بِالرُّوحِ. مُكَلِّمِينَ بَعْضُكُمْ بَعْضًا بِمَزَامِيرَ وَتَسَابِيحَ وَأَغَانِي رُوحِيَّةٍ مُرَنِّمِينَ وَمُرْتَلِينَ فِي قُلُوبِكُمْ لِلرَّبِّ.

الإنجيل

فصل شريف من بشارة القديس لوقا

قال الربُّ هذا المثل: «أقام رجلٌ وليمَةً كبيرةً، ودعا إليها كثيرًا من الناس. ثم أرسل خادِمَهُ سَاعَةَ الْوَلِيمَةِ يَقُولُ لِلْمَدْعُوبِينَ: تَعَالَوْا، فَكُلُّ شَيْءٍ مُهَيَّأٌ! فَأَعْتَدُوا كُلَّهُمْ. قَالَ لَهُ

الأوّل: أَشْتَرَيْتُ حَقْلًا وَيَجِبُ أَنْ أَذْهَبَ لِأَرَاهُ، أَرْجُو مِنْكَ أَنْ تَعْذُرَنِي. وَقَالَ آخَرُ: أَشْتَرَيْتُ
خَمْسَةَ فِدَادِينَ، وَأَنَا الْآنَ ذَاهِبٌ لِأَجْرِبَهَا، أَرْجُو مِنْكَ أَنْ تَعْذُرَنِي. وَقَالَ آخَرُ: تَزَوَّجْتُ
أَمْرَأَةً، فَلَا أَقْدِرُ أَنْ أَجِيءَ. فَرَجَعَ الْخَادِمُ إِلَى سَيِّدِهِ وَأَخْبَرَهُ بِمَا جَرَى، فَغَضِبَ رَبُّ الْبَيْتِ
وَقَالَ لِخَادِمِهِ: أَخْرُجْ مُسْرِعًا إِلَى سُوَارِعِ الْمَدِينَةِ وَأزِقْتِهَا وَأَدْخِلِ الْفُقَرَاءَ وَالْمُشَوَّهِينَ
وَالعُرْجَ وَالْعُمِيَانَ إِلَى هُنَا. فَقَالَ الْخَادِمُ: جَرَى مَا أَمَرْتَ بِهِ يَا سَيِّدِي، وَبَقِيَتْ مَقَاعِدُ
فَارِغَةً. فَأَجَابَهُ السَيِّدُ: أَخْرُجْ إِلَى الطَّرِيقَاتِ وَالدُّرُوبِ وَالزِّمِ النَّاسَ بِالدُّخُولِ حَتَّى يَمْتَلِئُ
بَيْتِي. أَقُولُ لَكُمْ: لَنْ يَدُوقَ عَشَائِي أَحَدٌ مِنْ أَوْلِيكَ الْمَدْعُوعِينَ، لِأَنَّ 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