

DECEMBER 13, 2015

ST. GEORGE GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH OF THE DESERT

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THE LADDER

THE HOLY FOREFATHERS; ST. HERMAN OF ALASKA

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– Fr. Theodore Pantels,

Proistamenos (Pastor)

– Deacon Euthym Kontaxis,

M.D.

Holy Communion Order

1. Please remain standing while following the directions of our ushers.
2. Ladies, kindly remove lipstick before receiving.
3. When receiving Holy Communion, make the Sign of the Cross, state your name (baptismal name), and naturally receive as if being fed.
4. Non-Orthodox Christians may not receive Holy Communion, but they may receive the Holy Bread at the end of the service.
5. All Orthodox Christians must be spiritually prepared to receive the Sacrament of Holy Communion. Please see the priest if you have any questions.

HEAVEN ON EARTH

Some people may ask: “Where is Paradise?” The answer is: Paradise is in Church where the Divine Liturgy is celebrated. It is the Mystical Banquet of Christ our God. The question to all who do not want to find themselves in Church for the Divine Liturgy is this: why would they like to be in Paradise?

Paradise is not a place where there are ten virgins; nor it is a place of “green pastures,” or a place of luxury and plenty of scrumptious foods! Nor is Paradise a condition such as “Nirvana.” You see

how the devil toys with humanity? Indeed, Paradise is to be found right in front of us. Yet, the devil places traps before us so that we may not want to attend the Divine Liturgy and draw near to Christ “with the fear of God, faith and love.”

The basic meaning of Christ’s parable, which we heard during the reading of today’s Gospel passage is that He calls us all to His banquet. Many find excuses for not attending this “Banquet of Paradise.”

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ST. HERMAN OF ALASKA—Saint Herman (his name is a variant of **Germanos**) was born near Moscow in 1756. In his youth he became a monk, first at the Saint Sergius Hermitage near Saint Petersburg on the Gulf of Finland; while he dwelt there, the most holy Mother of God appeared to him, healing him of a grave malady. Afterwards he entered Valaam Monastery on Valiant Island in Lake Ladoga. In 1794, answering a call for missionaries to preach the Gospel to the Aleuts, he came to the New World with the first Orthodox mission to Alaska. He settled on Spruce Island, which he called New Valaam, and here he persevered, even in the face of many grievous afflictions mostly at the hands of his own countrymen. Besides his many toils for the sake of the Aleuts, he subdued his flesh with great asceticism, sleeping little, fasting and praying much.

He brought many people to Christ by the example of his life, his teaching, and his kindness and sanctity, and was granted the grace of working miracles and of prophetic insight. Since he was not a priest, Angels descended at Theophany to bless the waters in the bay; Saint Herman used this holy water to heal the sick. Because of his tireless missionary labors, which were crowned by God with the salvation of countless souls, he is called the Enlightener of the Aleuts, and has likewise been known as a wonderworker since his repose in 1837.



Ερωτούν μερικοί: <Που είναι ο Παραδεισος;> Η απαντησις είναι: ο Παραδεισος είναι στην Εκκλησίαν εκεί όπου τελείται η Θεία Λειτουργία – η οποία είναι ο Μυστικός Δείπνος του Χριστού. Όσοι δεν θέλουν να παρευρεθούν στην τελετή της Θείας Λειτουργίας, πώς θεωρούν ότι θα τους αρεσει ο Παραδεισος;

Ο Παραδεισος δεν είναι κάπου όπου υπάρχουν δεκά παρθένες, η όπου είναι το <πρασινό χορτάρι>, η όπου υπάρχουν του κόσμου τα φαγητά! Ούτε είναι <Nirvana>. Είδατε πώς ο διαβόλος κοροϊδεύει την ανθρωπότητα! Αφού ο Παραδεισος ευρίσκεται μπροστά μας στην Αγίαν Τραπεζάν της Εκκλησίας. Και, όμως, ο διαβόλος βάζει δίκτυα μπροστά μας για να μην θέλει ο άνθρωπος να εκκλησιασθεί και να πλησιασθεί το Άγιο Ποτήριο <μετά φόβου Θεού, πίστεως και αγάπης.>

Μαλιστα, η βασική έννοια της παρολολγης του Θεού μας Χριστού, την οποίαν ακουσαμεν κατά το αναγνωσμα της σημερινής Ευαγγελικής περικοπής είναι ότι μας καλεί όλους στο τραπέζι Του. Μερικοί ευρίσκουν αφορμές ώστε να μην παρευρισκονται στον <Δείπνον της Παραδεισου.> Και, όμως, τι ακριβώς είναι πιο σπουδαίο για τον καθεναν μας (και συνεπώς για όλους γύρω μας) παρά να είμεθα κοντά στον Χριστόν στην Βασιλείαν Του – η οποία Βασιλεία είναι η Εκκλησία επί της γης; Ας προσεξουμε την πρώτην εκφώνησιν της Θείας Λειτουργίας: <Ευλοτημένη η Βασιλεία του Πατρός και του Υιού και του Αγίου Πνεύματος, νυν και αεί και εις τους αιώνας των αιώνων.>

+Ο ΠΑΤΗΡ ΘΕΟΔΩΡΟΣ

Still, what could be more important to each of us (and, by extension, to all the people around us) than to find ourselves with Christ in His Kingdom—the Kingdom which is His Church upon the earth? We need to remember the opening words of the Divine Liturgy: “Blessed is the Kingdom of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, now and forever and to the ages of ages.”

The Divine Liturgy is not a performance for our entertainment or personal gratification. It is a celebration of thanksgiving to God. It is *our offering* to God—meaning, that we do not *get* from the Liturgy if we do not *give* to God by participating in the Divine Liturgy.

Participation in the celebration of the Divine Liturgy demands much from each of us, because each of us makes up the Royal Priesthood. The teaching of the Church concerning the Royal Priesthood is based on the Bible—1 Peter 2:9: “But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s special possession, that you may declare the praises of Him Who called you out of darkness and into His wonderful light.” We find an on-going continuum throughout the Bible, from the first Book of the Bible, Exodus, where we read, “And you shall be to Me a Kingdom of priests, a holy nation.” (19:6), to the last Book of the Bible, Revelation, where we read, “And you made them a kingdom and priests to our God.” (5:10). According to Orthodox Christian teaching, the ordained priest cannot perform a Sacrament of the Church without the presence of the faithful, who are also members of Christ’s Priesthood, in terms of each person’s individual calling in life.

Saints are the true *priests and ministers* of the Church—men and women who have lived a life dedicated to giving glory to God and bringing salvation to others. As such, the community of the Saints is the ideal of the Royal Priesthood of God. Living as Saints of Christ our God can turn our homes; our neighborhoods and our society into “Heaven on earth.” It is an ideal that we can each strive for by seeking to emulate the Saints in our daily life-style.

Today, we commemorate St. Herman of Alaska, who, although was not an ordained priest, the Holy Spirit allowed him to do the work of a priest so that many could be saved. Participating in the Banquet of Christ is a calling to the priesthood of Christ, which is at once a life of service to God and a life of true fulfillment as persons of God.

+FR. THEODORE

PRAY FOR THE SICK: Yvonne and George Flessas, George Aeder, Adele Gallade, Kathy Ligeros, Erika Aguilar, Aryroula Krespis (Nick Krespis’ mother), Bob Maverick, John Kouletsis (Mary Mitsias’ brother), Robert Fleming (Rhonda Latkovic’s father), Debbie Vawter, Skip Lewis, Doris Elmo, Anne Boukidis-Michas (*Many of the faithful on our Prayer List face chronic or serious illness*).

HYMNS FOR THIS SUNDAY'S CELEBRATION OF THE DIVINE LITURGY

ANTIPHON I:

Verse 1: Bless the Lord, O my soul, and everything within me, bless His holy name.

Response: "Tes presvies tis Theotokou, Soter, soston imas."

Verse 2: Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His rewards.

Response: "By the prayers of the Theotokos, Savior, O save us."

Verse 3: The Lord prepared His throne in heaven, and His Kingdom rules over all.

Response: "Tes presvies tis Theotokou, Soter, soston imas."

Chanter(s): "Glory to the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, both now and forever and to the ages of ages. Amen".

Response: "By the prayers of the Theotokos, Savior, save us."

ANTIPHON II:

Verse 1: Praise the Lord, O my soul! I shall praise the Lord while I live; I shall sing to my God as long as I exist.

Response: "Soston imas Ie Theou, o Anastas ek nekron, psallontas si: Allilouia."

Verse 2: Blessed is he whose help is the God of Jacob; his hope is in the Lord his God.

Response: Save us, O Son of God, Who arose from the dead, we sing to You: Alleluia.

Verse 3: The Lord shall reign forever; your God, O Zion, to all generations.

Response: "Soston imas Ie Theou, o Anastas ek nekron, psallontas si: Allilouia."

Chanter(s): "Doxa Patri ke Io, ke Ayio Pnevmati, ke nin ke ai ke is tous eonas ton eonon. Amin."

People: O Monogenis Ios ke Logos tou Theou... (O Only-Begotten Son and Word of God...)

ANTIPHON III: *This is the day the Lord made; let us greatly rejoice and be glad therein.*

Resurrection Hymn: *Efrenestho ta ourania [Tone 3]... (When You descended to the realm of death, You as Life Immortal rendered to Hades a mortal blow by Your all radiant Divinity. And when You from infer-nal depths and the darkness below did raise the dead, all the hosts of heaven's powers did proclaim and cry out: O Life-giving Christ and our God, we give glory.)*

Hymn for the Holy Forefathers: *En pisti tous propatores... (By faith You justified the Forefathers, having through them betrothed to Yourself the Church that came out of the nations. The Saints are boasting in glory; for the glorious fruit, the Virgin Who without seed gave birth to You, is from their progeny. At their entreaties, O Christ our God, save our souls.)*

Hymn to St. Herman of Alaska: *Os askitis tis vorrhahs... (You are the blessed ascetic of the North wilds and gracious intercessor for the whole world and teacher of the Orthodox Faith. You are the good instructor. You are the adornment of Alaska and the joy of all America. Holy Father Herman pray to Christ our God that He save our souls.)*

Hymn to St. George: *Os ton ehmaloton eleftherotis... ("As the one who sets the captives free and the protector of the poor; as physician to the sick and the champion defender of kings, bearer of trophies are you, O Great Martyr George, intercede with Christ our God that He may save our souls.")*

Kontakion Hymn for this Sunday: *Ee Parthenos simeron... (On this day the Virgin Maid goes to the cave to give birth to the Pre-eternal Word in an ineffable manner. Dance for joy all the inhabited earth as you hear of this. Glorify along with the Angels and the shepherds Him Who willed that He appear as a newborn Child, the Pre-eternal God.)*

READINGS: Epistle: Colossians 3: 4-11 / Gospel: St. Luke 14: 16-24

Megalynarion (Hymn to the Theotokos): Axion Estin... (Divine Liturgy Book, Pg. 51)

Communion Hymn: *Enite ton Kyrion ek ton ouranon... (Divine Liturgy Book, pg. 64)*

"Above all else,
guard your heart, for
it is the well-spring
of life" Proverbs 4:23



ANNOUNCEMENTS

Ushers: Jim Christopoulos, Nick Kaperonis, John Petalas
Greeter: Mariya Dunkel
Coffee Hour Hostess: Philoptochos

ALTAR FLOWER BOUQUETS—Last week’s Altar Flower Bouquets adorning our Holy Altar Gates were donated by:

Mr. and Mrs. Bill Piggott: “In loving memory of Mary’s mother, Malamo Tartas.”

Mr. and Mrs. Angelo Veroulis: “Trust in the Lord will all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your path straight.”

Mr. and Mrs. Skip Lewis: “Let go and let God.”

Debra Pousen: “In memory of my mother-‘I will keep you always in my heart, dear loving mother.’”

PHILOPTOCHOS—Our Bake Sale goodies will be available after Church Services in the Church Hall today and next Sunday, December 20. Don't forget to pick up your orders. We need a Coffee Hour Hostess for December 27. Are you available? Let Linda Petalas know. Today we will be selling reservations for our Taverna Night. Stop by at the Philoptochos table and see **Susan Clark. Opa!**

BABY BOTTLE DRIVE—SAVE A LIFE! - Be a part of a ministry dedicated to giving life to the babies who God chooses to send into the world. Pre-born babies can be given a home! "Giving is a BLESSING", and your Gift can make a difference! See **Josie Desnoyers or Fr. Ted today** in the Parish Hall after Divine Liturgy.

PARISH ELECTIONS TODAY — In order to be given a ballot, one must be a Stewardship member of our parish. The members of the Election Committee are: **Annette Lewis, Eve Meek and Angie Dyer.** The candidates listed on the ballot, who are to serve as members of the Parish Council for 2016 are: **Linda Kallis, Nick Kaperonis, Nick Krespis and Tina Veroulis.**

TOY DRIVE—toys for children in need may be placed in our “Toy Drive” box in our parish hall. Today is the last day of our “Toy Drive.”

CHRISTMAS CAROLING—Sunday School students, together with parents and teachers, will be singing Christmas carols to a few of our senior citizens this afternoon.

COLORING BOOK PROJECT—The December **Adult Coloring Book Project** session will take place in our parish hall on **Wednesday, December 16th at 12:00 noon.** Projects include landscapes, monastery scenes, gardens, etc. The future might include coloring icons of Saints and religious scenes. See the “Coloring Book Project” flier in our parish hall.

WEEKDAY CALENDAR

Tuesday, December 15th.....Bible Study – 10:00 a.m.
Wednesday, December 16th.....Coloring Book Project – 12:00 noon
Thursday, December 17th.....ST. DIONYSIOS
Orthros-8:30 a.m./Divine Liturgy-9:30 a.m.
Choir Practice-4:00 p.m.
Saturday, December 19th.....Vespers – 5:00 p.m.

The Ladder for December 2015 is sponsored by: Matushka Gloria Lehman

We encourage all of our parents to sit in the church with their entire family as they participate in the beauty and mysteries of the Divine Liturgy. For those with young children, feel free to sit near an aisle so that you may easily take your children for a break, as needed. If necessary, we have a “crying room” in the narthex for your use. God Bless.