



Holy Ghost Orthodox Church

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## \*\*\*\*\*ADVENT/SAINT PHILIP'S FAST/PILIPKIVA\*\*\*\*\*

**ON THE MEND:** Please keep the following parishioners and others in your prayers for recovery from their illnesses and injuries: Archbishop Daniel, Metropolitan Antony, Metropolitan Yurij, Archbishop Jovan, Metropolitan Savas, Father Paul & Pani Judy Stoll, Father Joseph Kopchak, Father Elias Warnke, Father George Yatsko, Father Paul Bigelow, Father Emilian Balan, Father John & Pani Mary Anne Nakonachny, Father Steve Repa, Archpriest Dionysi Vitali, Protodeacon Joseph Hotrovich, Father Paisius McGrath, Father Michael Smoly nec, Father Lawrence Daniels, Father Joe & Protinica Linda Cervo, Igumen Patrick, Father Jim Orr, Father Rick Seilier, Panimatka Laryssa Charest, Father Vasyl Sendeha, Father George & Dobrodijka Oksana Bazylevsky, Father Angelo Artemas, Father John Haluszczak, Father Christopher Bender, Dr. Christina Nellis, Father Joshua [Anna], Father Justin (Todd) Mokhiber, Pani Cathy Danczak, Monk Andrew, Father Dan & Matushka Myra Kovalak, Pastor Terry & Lisa Polen, Chaplain Rachelle Zazzu, Eva Malesnick, Nick Behun, Gary & Linda Mechtly, Evelyn Misko, Jeanne Boehing, Alex Drobot, Rachelle, Jane Golofski, Doug Diller, Harry Krewsun, Mary Alice Babcock, Dorie Kunkle, Mary Evelyn King, Sam Wadrose, Isabella Olivia Lindgren, Ethel Thomas, Donna, Erin, Michael Miller, Grace & Owen Ostrasky, Patti Sinecki, David Genshi, Sue Segeleon, Mike Gallagher, Liz Stumpf, Theodore Nixon, Michelle Corba Kapeluck, Margaret Vladimir, Luke Emmerling, Robert McKivitz, Liz Obradovich, Halyna Zelinska [Archbishop Daniel's mother], Charlotte, Andrew Mark Olynyk, Deborah Finley, Claire Senita, Eleanor Kelly, Bryan, Nancy Barylak, Patrick Keenan, Khrystyna Chorniy, Anthony Cormier, Nathan Forbeck, Sarah Doyle, Samuel Peters, David Vallor, Henry Faraly, Julie Eiler, Dorothy Lednovich, Bob C., Allie—young girl with leukemia, Heather Kramer, Jane Wartinbee, Matthew—young man with cancer, Nicholas Orlando, Mary Ann Kuznik, Michael Pryhodzenko, Theresa Ditto, Mary Ann Musial, Yvonne Christy, Father Deacon Myron & Barbara Spak, Julia Duda, Lisa Pandle, Kris & Julie Hanczar, John Kennedy, Gaelle Kelly, Irma McDivitt, Robin Young, Mckayla, Rachel, Carl & Margaret Reed, Lydia Wilson, Robert Pointon, Walter Cecelia, John Persico, Jeff Miller, Mary Kernick, Glenn Miller, Jean Marie, Donna & Walter McCrackin, Gene Blair [Pani Gina's dad], David Hoenshell, Barbara Macino, Shelley Hill, Linda Cawley, Gerald Cogley, Corey Guich, Robert

*Vangrin, Pauline Witkowsky, Sera White, Deborah Smith, Nancy & Eric Dunik, Julian Strozh [young lady with cerebral palsy], Patricia Corey, Michelle, Katie Swarm, Michelle, Patrick, Linda Morris, Chris, David Hiles, Jennifer, Cher Mount, Jim Wandling, Gail, Sirena Sharp, Ron Paulovich, Sandi Anderson, Lina, Shirley, Denny Mader, Ella Campbell, Bill Janiro, Jean Symanko-Andy's sister, William Lemonakis, Alma Wyke, Lindsay Romanczak & family, Susan Lucas, Neil Carter & family, James Paluh, Mickie Weikel, Evelyn Krempasky, Tammy Strunk, Loida Esbry, Darlene Chicka Deskins, Drew, Alice & Keith Philipa, Mira Filipović, Lynn, Jacqueline, Sharon, Zan Cheng, Kristy, Brandon, Anna Tranchine, Demetra, Blase Urban, Catherine Hogel & children, Jennifer & Dylan, Lydia Wilson, Flora Tomlin, Howell Swarm, Jane Bielewicz Allred, Katie Elizabeth, Mileva, & Michael, Deirdré Straughan, Terri Paluh, Lori & Steve Lucier, Kyranna Cherpas, Pastor Bruce Nordeen, Heather Ried, Carla Perry, Linda Elliot, Dennis McDaniel, Luke Tinsley, Brent, Tricia, Katherine Gorman, Pamela Jaquette, Sherri Walewski, Marika Zeliszczuk, Donna Davis, Jackie Crimbchin, Margie Sekelsky, Fran Fulton, Bill Vizza, Jamie Swarm, Kathy Flaherty, Tori Reade-Henry's niece, Derick-Glen Burlack's neighbor, Michael, Nichole & Christopher, Ben Douglas, Dianne Donahue, Zachary, Natasha, Noah Willard, Gregory Cervo, Lisa Bruce, Kathy Cvetkovich, Judy, Will, Emma, Ginny, Ye-Jin, Maria, John & JoAnn, Ralph & Beverly Stoker, Noah Willard, Nikola, Natalie, Nikola, & Nevenka Jovonovich, Julia Collier, Amy Kemerer, Thomas Smith, Tracy Slaugenhaft, Louis Berceli, Tom Nolan, Silvia Martin, Dena & George, Georgia, Lawanda [Evelyn's niece], Maureen Sams, John Kendall, Darcy, Nancy, Ian Brick, Cecilia Barnhart, Logan Magorien, Pam & Gordon Grant, Debbie & Jerry Novosel, Noah Willard, Sandra Dillard, Danielle McCann, Barry [Father Jim Orr's cousin], Tim Joyce, Stephen Popichak—Fr. Bob's brother, Brianna Stumpf, Stanley Porembka, David & Terry Coyne Hartnett, Mike C., Jennifer Scheirer [Nick Behun's daughter], Catherine Beecham [Father Bob's cousin], JoAnne & Dave Andrews, Rev. Peg Bowman, Pat & Jan Jennings, Mike Ruzzi, Mary Kay Ludovicy, George Dilendorf, Sharon Torick, Carol Behun, Erv Frye, William Lusherand, Colin Kirton—Stage 4 pancreatic cancer, Clifford, Paul Riley, Tonee & Sydnee Turner, Annette Paluh, Theresa Paluh, Cathy Lotinsky, Jeff & Buschra Kerr, Margaret Sekelsky, Robert Sekelsky, Robert Rodriguez, Rita & Joe Mrvos, Alexandra & Bowen, Katherine Kulik, Eleanor Kitt, Maria Warholak, Christy, Mariruth, Judy Previc, Ben Williams, Tim—surgery, Olivia—girl with a brain tumor, Rick & Sharon Morgan, John Stasko, John, Kris, & Kait, Wendy LaGamba, Melissa Gross [hip replacement], Amy Forbeck, David Salazar, Dr. Paul Riley, David Hess, Serena, Wyatt, Makenzie, Jennifer, Alexandra Roberts, Candace, Dave, Jared, & Beth Irvin, Carol Muschick, Grace Love [knee replacement], Joseph Paul Cervo, Jr.,*

*Elizabeth, Susan & Greg Heinen & Jenette Wittik, Paul Simpson [Father Bob's cousin], Sharon Curtis Rivas, Kathy Milcic, Lisa Bolan, David G. [cancer], Donna [dementia] & Darla, Adam Snow, the McKenna family, David Gazella, Brian & Michele Cannone, the Rodrigues family, Michael Welsh, Nick Solominsky, Samantha & Lisa Houser, Sarah Stepanovich Clark, Julia Baloga, Brett Crosby, Randy Lapuh, Henry Tkacik, Diane & Arthur Chaklis, Denny Mader, Zoe Oswalt—Fr. Bob's cousin, Barbette [cancer] & Scott, Kristin [cancer], Erm Hartmann, Barbara Bookser, Bob Mazzuca, Marko, Taylor, Terri Crosby-Vega, Christine Mohamed & family, Tammy Marsico, Terry & David Hartnett, Jamie Ball, Kay Williams, Hannah Stewart, Jim Wyko—Alex's friend, Dan Losego, Lisa Bruce, Yvette, Barry Bender, Andrew Zelleznick, Byron & Cecilia Scott, Vespina, Michelle Russo, Julie Tripodi, Debbie—HTUCC, Barbara Morvay, David Salsar, N&O, Randy & Adrienne Kuny, Vince Berardinelli, Mason Martin [Karns City HS QB] & family, Martin Mrvos, Jeff McCoy, Lauren & Sloane Valentina Persico, Alexis & Colton Rosati, Jessica Shirley, Mark [kidney cancer], Steve Milcic, Wilbert Wagner, Bob Wojciechowski, Ashley, Beth, Sharon Svitek, Laura, Christopher, & Jane Dickson, Luke D, Diane Murphy, Kristin Vaughn [Harry's daughter], George Petronsky, Doug & Darcie Burkholder, Michael, Jeane, and Katie Byerly, McGrath, Samantha Lopez, Bob [cancer], Syble Elliott, Maria Ancevski, Krystyna, John, & Jeffrey, Dottie & family, Bonny Diver & Ashley Smock, Steve, Jill Morocco, Mike Pelino, Maddie Stewart, Hutchinson Family, David Urban, Vicky Moore, Casi [cancer], Ashley & Andy, Marion Mamula, Dominic [cancer], Diane Hughes, Jenny Case, Mary & Carl Stepanovich, Susie Fierst, Edward Poturich, Jeff, Chris, & Mills family, Kate Rapina & Mother Oksana, Sarah's son, Rachel, Alex, & little Charlie, Steve & Vonne Gerson, Eva, Pamela & Doug, Nora, Mike & Jane, Mary Ann [Stage 4 cancer] & Lisa, Barbara Gardner & Mark Egleton, Donna Karas & Ross Rawe, Susan [cancer], Rose Marie, Tim Pruss, Donna & Laura Kloock, Tom Katona, Chris & Elisa Astorino, Dale & Nancy Burns, Cathy Metrick [Fr. Bob's cousin], Brianna [cancer] & Amanda, and Lauren, Dan, & Daphne Iona... We pray that God will grant them all a complete and speedy recovery.*

**HAPPY BIRTHDAY to our December babies: Scot Brunemer on the 14<sup>th</sup> and Donna Karas on the 18<sup>th</sup>. May God grant them Many Happy, Healthy, Prosperous, and Blessed Years! M'nohaya Lita! God Bless their families and friends...**

**Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ... There is NOTHING to keep us from praying...for each other, for our family and friends, and most of all for the first responders—EMTs, nurses, doctors, firefighters,**

police officers, and members of our military who keep us safe. Be well and be SAFE!!! God Bless!

Please remember ALL American service men and women in your prayers. May God watch over them and ALL service men and women—and bring them all home safely!

## **REMEMBER—PRAYERS ARE ALWAYS FREE!**

Communion Fasting: nothing to eat or drink after midnight, EXCEPT in cases where your doctor tells you to eat or drink something for medical reasons: medication, diabetes, etc. ***If you have a question, please ask Father Bob.***

**AT ANY TIME—if there is an emergency, if you have questions, or if you just need to talk, please CALL FATHER BOB at [412] 956-6626.**

### **SERVICES IN SLICKVILLE**

**SUNDAY, December 28 OBEDNITZA—SAINT JOHN CHRYSOSTOM—UPSTAIRS 10:30 AM  
29<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST; SUNDAY OF THE HOLY FOREFATHERS;  
HIEROMARTYR ELEUTHERIUS-BISHOP OF ILLYRIA, HIS MOTHER MARTYR  
ANTHIA, & MARTYR CORIVUS THE EPARCH; VENERABLE PAUL OF MOUNT  
LATROS; MARTYR ELEUTHERIUS; VENERABLE PARDUS-HERMIT; SAINT  
STEPHEN THE CONFESSOR-ARCHBISHOP OF SUROZH IN THE CRIMEA**

*Tone 4*

*Colossians 3:4-11*

*Luke 14:14-24*

***Litany in Blessed Memory of Thomas Bryan, Pearl Hanczar, John Hanczar, Helen Pytlak, Mary Blitskan, Marjorie Yarneak, Mary Sharon, Rose Pyrch, Cynthia Mycyk, Frank Barankovich, Mary Krevanich, Katherine Holowaty, Robert Vetosky, & Father Paul Pyrch—Fr. Bob***

**SUNDAY, January 04, 2026 \*\*\*\*\*NO SERVICE IN SLICKVILLE\*\*\*\*\*  
30<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST; SUNDAY BEFORE THE NATIVITY; SUNDAY OF  
THE HOLY FATHERS; FOREFEAST OF THE NATIVITY; GREAT-MARTYR  
ANASTASIA OF ROME, TEACHER MARTYR CHRYSOGORIUS, & WITH THEM  
MARTYRS THEODOTA, EVODAS, EUTYCHAINUS, & OTHERS**

*Tone 5*

*Hebrews 11:9-10, 17-23, 32-40*

*Matthew 1:1-25*

**WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 07 NATIVITY OF OUR LORD AND SAVIOR JESUS CHRIST**

**SUNDAY, January 11 OBEDNITZA—SAINT JOHN CHRYSOSTOM—UPSTAIRS 10:30 AM**

**31<sup>ST</sup> SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST; SUNDAY AFTER THE NATIVITY; 14,000 HOLY INNOCENTS SLAIN BY HEROD AT BETHLEHEM; VENERABLE MARCELLUS-ABBOT OF THE MONASTERY OF THE UNSLEEPING ONES; VENERABLE THADDEUS-CONFESSOR OF THE STUDION; VENERABLE MARK-GRAVE DIGGER, THEOPHIL, & JOAN OF PERCHEVSKY LAVRA; VENERABLE LAURENCE OF CHERNIHIV**

*Tone 6*

Galatians 1:11-19

Matthew 2:13-23

*Litany in Blessed Memory of Rose Zalenchak, Stephen Kuzman, Timothy Stutchell, Cecilia Pysh, Nicholas Vatosky, Robert Rohal, and Gary Atutes—Fr. Bob*

## **BULLETIN INSERT FOR 28 DECEMBER 2025**

**29<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST; SUNDAY OF THE HOLY FOREFATHERS; HIEROMARTYR ELEUTHERIUS-BISHOP OF ILLYRIA, HIS MOTHER MARTYR ANTHIA, & MARTYR CORIVUS THE EPARCH; VENERABLE PAUL OF MOUNT LATROS; MARTYR ELEUTHERIUS; VENERABLE PARDUS-HERMIT; SAINT STEPHEN THE CONFESSOR-ARCHBISHOP OF SUROZH IN THE CRIMEA**

### **Troparion—Tone 2**

Thou didst justify the Forefathers by faith,  
when of old through them Thou didst betroth Thyself to the Church of the nations.

The Saints rejoice in the glorious fruit of their seed,  
even in her who bore Thee seedlessly.

By their prayers, O Christ our God, save our souls.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now, and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen!

### **Kontakion—Tone 2**

An image made with hands you would not worship, O thrice blessed three;  
but protected by the ineffable Essence you were glorified in your ordeal by fire.

From the midst of the devouring flames you called upon God, crying:  
Hasten, O compassionate One,  
in Thy mercy come to our aid,/ for if Thou willest Thou canst.

### **PROKEIMENON—TONE 4**

**READER:** O Lord, how manifold are thy works! In wisdom hast Thou made them all.

**PEOPLE: O Lord, how manifold are thy works! In wisdom hast Thou made them all.**

**READER: Bless the Lord, O my soul! O Lord my God, Thou art very great!**

**PEOPLE: O Lord, how manifold are thy works! In wisdom hast Thou made them all.**

**READER: O Lord, how manifold are thy works!**

**PEOPLE: In wisdom hast Thou made them all.**

### **ALLELUIA VERSES—TONE 4**

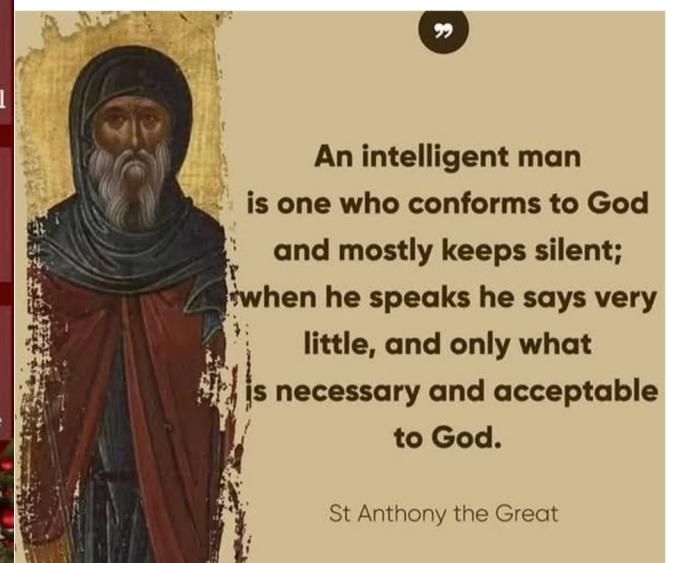
Go forth and prosper and reign, because of truth and meekness and righteousness.

You love righteousness and hate iniquity.

### *9 interesting facts about CHRISTMAS*

BASILICA.RO

Bethlehem means 'house of bread', a symbol of the Eucharist	The Magi followed the Star for over two years
The mystery of the Nativity was first announced by the angels to a group of shepherds	According to St John Chrysostom, the Star was the Archangel Gabriel
Baby Jesus was born in a cave	The Magi, Caspar, Melchior, Balthazar came from different countries
Two midwives were present, Zelomi and Salome (Virgin Mary's cousin)	Until the fourth century, the Nativity of the Lord was celebrated together with the Epiphany



### **Fr. Thaddaeus Hardenbrook**

Here we are, in a season of celebration, hospitality, and anticipation of things to come. We feasted on Thanksgiving, and then entered with joy and satisfaction into the Nativity fast. The Nativity fast is a gentle fast, with fish, wine, and oil on most days.

And the great feast of the Nativity of Christ which we approach is a profoundly joyous feast. A feast of the mystery of God, born as man. Yet a bright feast, a sweet feast. With the suddenness of the angelic proclamation to the shepherds, like the sudden appearance of Gabriel at the

Annunciation, the birth of Christ is simply given. And it brings joy and anticipation. We fast to focus ourselves spiritually. But the joy of the feast is already upon us.

It is a wide open invitation. All are invited. Nothing stops us from attending this great feast. There is no weakness, no poverty, no protocol that can keep us from this feast. Like the man who offered the banquet in this morning's gospel, the only things that keep us away from the feast are lame excuses. These are excuses that show our ignorance regarding the event that is about to happen.

From the mouth of God we hear the words, A certain man gave a great supper and invited many. But they all, with one accord, began to make excuses. My land, my cows, my wife, and so on. And the master said to his servants, Go into the highways and the hedges and compel all to come in, that my house may be filled. For I say to you that none of those who made excuses shall taste of my supper. May we all be freed from the excuses that keep us away from entering into the Nativity fast and the Nativity feast.

And today, halfway through the fast, we are also given a celebration of the patron saint of Nativity, the patron of gift-giving, of secret good works, and sneaking around in people's houses at night for righteousness' sake. Saint Nicholas the Wonderworker. In this great saint of the church we see the fruit of one who truly and wholly received Christ's invitation to dine.

He was a great teacher, a distributor of gifts to the poor, a defender of Orthodoxy against heresy, a defender of the innocent against false accusations, the patron of sailors and fishermen, for he, like Christ, also calms the seas for their protection. Such were his good works within the community of believers that once, when Saint Nicholas was considering retiring to a life of silence and solitude, a voice from on high was heard saying to him, "Nicholas, set about your work among the people if you desire to receive a crown from me". That would be motivating.

Almost immediately after taking up his work among the people again, he was chosen bishop of Myra in Lycia, just in time to begin a defense of the church against the persecutions of Diocletian and Maximian. Later, he struggled mightily against the Arian heresy at the first ecumenical council, himself striking Arius in order to silence his blasphemy. Because of this, he was removed from the council and stripped of his duties as bishop.

But, as the prologue says, Christ and the Theotokos appeared to several of the chief bishops and showed their sympathy for Nicholas, and he was restored. Tonight, after Vespers, we celebrate the coming of Nativity with our annual Christmas program. It is always fun for children, for all of us, and a good opportunity for non-Orthodox friends to meet the parish

community. So come and celebrate. No excuses. And if you are good, I even heard that St. Nicholas himself just may be there.

When I first came to understand personally who St. Nicholas was, I was very happy to find out that Santa Claus really existed, that my childhood fondness for someone who would sneak into my house to give me a gift was not wasted. And I'm pretty sure myself that St. Nicholas is the tooth fairy, too. Makes sense, doesn't it? But to be honest, deep in my heart, deep in my heart, I had a hard time placing St. Nicholas among my own patron saints.

So many years of marketing gimmicks, silly red men in suits, reindeers, elves, and the spirit of materialism had clouded my mind and my heart. Other saints leapt right off the pages and into my life. But my link with St. Nicholas was stymied. I could see him clearly in history, but not in my life. Then in 1988, along with many others from our parish community, I made my first Orthodox pilgrimage. It was to Russia for the millennial celebration of Orthodoxy there.

And among all the wonders and riches of Russian Orthodoxy, I was struck with how popular St. Nicholas was. St. Nicholas churches, St. Nicholas monasteries, icons in every church and every home. And I began to realize that this was a real saint. This was a man, a real Christian man, who lived a real life of Christian faith and works, a pillar of greatness in the church. And he waited for me to call upon him, as all saints do, as all saints do. And recently I stopped and took a good look at the Orthodox understanding of communion of the saints for our catechism class.

There are many theological truths about the unity of the church, both militant and triumphant, living and departed, on earth and in heaven. We have a strong apologetic against the West's misunderstanding or total abandonment of the saints. But for me, looking at these things, it all came down to one profound thing. God does not change. God does not change. Nor does he call us to anything that passes away.

There is no dichotomy or dualism in his relationship with us. No set of conditions that work here on earth temporarily that will be replaced by separate conditions in heaven. What God offers us today, what we are called to do today, the life given to the saints of God, that which St. Nicholas accepted from God and became by the power of the Holy Spirit, all of these things are the same. They are the beginnings of eternity. They are the seeds of paradise, the first days, the first days of immortality. And what God gives is good, and it does not pass away.

Love, compassion, charity, intercession, virtue, every gift of God that begins here will endure forever. Purified? Yes. Sanctified? Yes. Perfected in Christ? Yes. But the seeds planted and nurtured in us and by us will

endure eternally. And this is exactly why we have communion with all the members of Christ's body, living and departed.

We are one in Christ and unified by life in Him. One God, one family, one Father, one communion. And having passed through the veil of death into the mystical presence of God, the saints don't stop doing what Christ called them and us to do.

In 2 Thessalonians, Colossians, and Corinthians, we see that on earth the holy apostles hoped and prayed for all people. Quote, "we also pray always for you that our God would count you worthy of this calling. We do not cease to pray for you and to ask that you might be filled with the knowledge of His will. And this also we pray for, even your perfection. We do not cease to pray for you", Saint Paul says to the Christians on earth. And if the prayer of the apostle on earth was unceasing, how is it possible that it should cease when they are absent from the body and present with the Lord? For Saint Paul tells us, "love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will fail. Where there are tongues, they will cease. Where there is knowledge, it will vanish away. But love never fails".

If the saints while on earth had love for people, and by this love which is in Christ they obtained eternal life, when they passed over in love from death into life, they are not deprived of this love for people, but continue to possess it. If the saints had compassion for people on earth, if they had an unfailing desire for their salvation, if they had prayer for them before God, if here they heard and accepted requests for prayer, if they knew the needs and deeds of men, even those that are hidden and secret, and were able to help the people by the power of grace granted them by God, then they will lose none of these things, none of these abilities, when they are absent from the body and present with the Lord.

Love in Christ has no more end than Christ Himself, for He is that love. That's an important thing for us to contemplate. Love in Christ has no more end than Christ Himself, for He is that love.

When in Russia, I was very blessed to gain a better understanding of St. Nicholas, for I wanted him to be freed of the red suits and reindeer in my mind. I wanted to call upon him as one of my intercessors before God, but above and beyond all his churches, all his monasteries, all his icons that I saw, I was most affected when I met him. I don't even remember what church or monastery it was, perhaps St. Nicholas Skete, but we were led downstairs into the lower church, most big churches abroad, especially in Russia, have an upper and lower church, one they use in the winter and one they use in the summer, and it was unbelievably beautiful down there, like so many other churches we'd seen.

We were led across the church to near the base of one of the large columns in the middle of the church, our guide pointed, and there, hanging

about six or seven feet off the ground, was a very large, very beautiful icon of St. Nicholas, maybe three or four feet tall. And I thought, wow, here we go again. St. Nicholas, you are everywhere. But this icon was different from the others that I had seen. It had little stairs leading up to it, and a little platform, and then steps going down the other side. And I thought at first it was a little funny that they had gone through all the trouble to build steps up to the icon rather than just putting the icon lower.

You know, practical American mind. But what I did not realize was that this icon was worthy of elevation. A little woman went up the steps, she made her low bows, opened the large glass case that encased the icon, and there he was, St. Nicholas himself. A relic as big as my hand. His flesh, the man, the saint. Saint Nicholas of Myra, it hit me, was right there. And when I ascended, when my turn came to ascend that little stairway to him, I tell you it was better than any kid's dream of sitting in Santa's lap. The scent of his sanctified body poured out of the giant relic and filled the entire area. His 1700-year-old body delivered sweetness to my nose and to my soul.

And when I breathed it in and I prayed, St. Nicholas, pray to God for us, the little red suits and reindeer were gone. The man stuck in history up until that point was gone. For me, I knew that as I was struggling to come to find St. Nicholas in my life, here, with an unexpected invitation like the invitation we heard in the gospel today, he had found me.

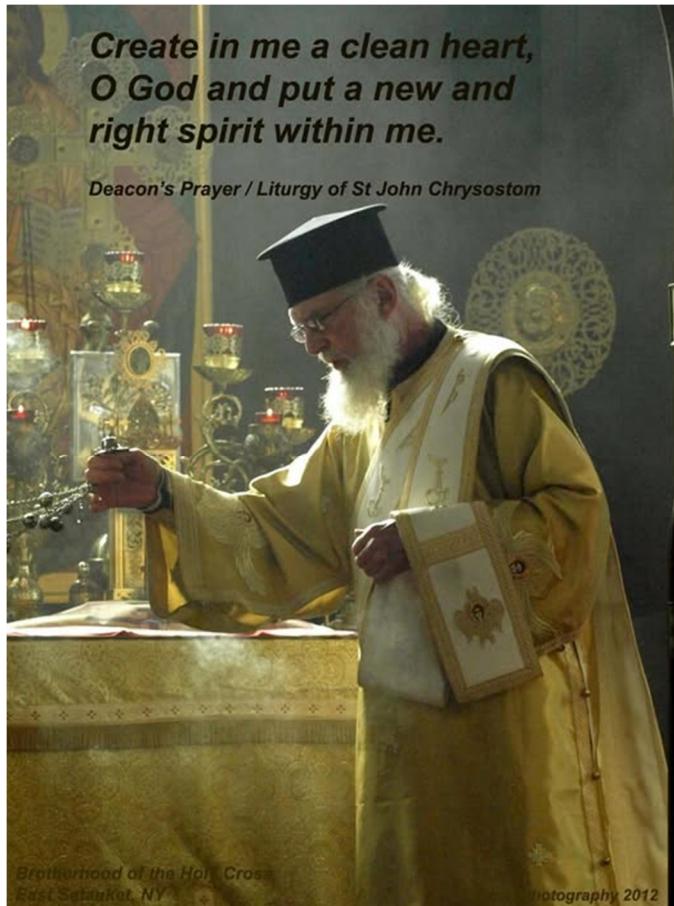
And we are all invited to this banquet of the saints. We are all invited to the banquet of the Feast of Nativity, which is the first feast, remember this, in our life today, in these weeks right now, in the present moment, this is the first feast of an eternal celebration. For as St. Paul said to the Ephesians and St. Nicholas and all the saints say to us today, "So then, you are no longer strangers and sojourners, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and of the household of God".

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.



**There was a worthless drunkard, a thief and a bum with impudent eyes. His mother prayed for him day and night with tears. Her son often hurt her, but she trusted in God. He drank her last kopeck, but his mother forgave and bore it all. One day her patience ran out and she cried, "All in vain, no salvation, I can't pray for him." And, oblivious to a heavy sleep, she sees Satan sitting on his throne. He shouts, he rages in his anger, he asks the demons angrily: "Why is this alcoholic, hooligan, and thief wandering in the world? Why have you not yet brought me this crooked soul?" "The torments of hell have long been ready," they said, "but the mothers prayer saves. The powers of darkness are powerless against her." Suddenly the little demon flies in hastily: "At last the battle is won! Gather for the sinful soul. The mothers prayer has fallen silent!" The pack of demons with laughter fled away. The mother, awakened, knelt down. "Lord, forgive me this weakness!" And since then the prayer has not been silent.**

**Father Artemy Vladimirov**



Saint Innocent of Moscow (Veniaminov) explained to his parishioners how to find the way to The Kingdom of Heaven, in parables.

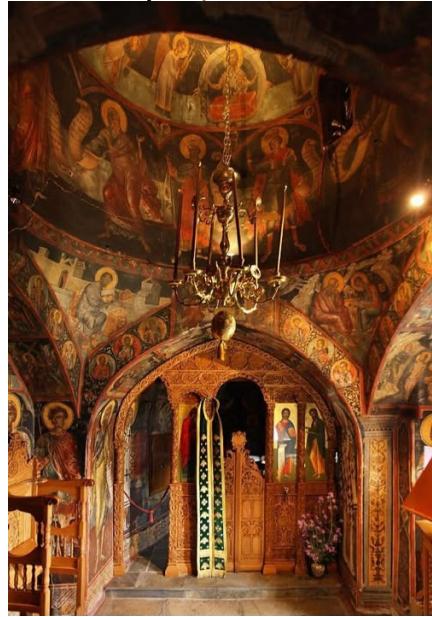
Imagine that, unexpectedly, you suddenly find yourself the sole heir of a wealthy distant relative. Before his death, this relative bequeathed to you his luxurious dacha on the top of a picturesque mountain.

Loving his solitude, this relative did not build a road to his dacha, but rather walked there himself along a path. To help you take possession of the dacha, he left you a map of the mountain, marking the necessary path on it. Thus, to reach the bequeathed dacha, you must follow the path marked by your loving relative.

Something similar must be done for us who wish to reach the heavenly abode prepared for us by the Lord Jesus Christ. We must thoroughly understand the path that leads there, how not to lose our way, what to beware of, and so on.

Our map is the Holy Scriptures and Orthodox books; the foresters are the shepherds of the Church, whose duty it is to assist the faithful and guide them toward paradise. Provisions are God's grace, strengthening our spiritual strength.

Perhaps in places the path leading to paradise will prove narrow, overgrown with bushes, and difficult to navigate, while other paths will seem wider and more comfortable. But it's best not to trust appearances. The Lord Jesus Christ and the apostles repeatedly warned that only one path, the one indicated in the Gospel, leads to the Kingdom of Heaven.



## **UPCOMING SERVICES SCHEDULE**

**SUNDAY, DECEMBER 28 OBEDNITZA UPSTAIRS**

**SUNDAY, JANUARY 04 NO SERVICE**

**SUNDAY, JANUARY 11 OBEDNITZA UPSTAIRS**

**SUNDAY, JANUARY 18 NO SERVICE**

**SUNDAY, JANUARY 25 OBEDNITZA UPSTAIRS**

**SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 01 NO SERVICE**

**SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 08 OBEDNITZA UPSTAIRS**

**SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 15 NO SERVICE**

**SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 22 OBEDNITZA UPSTAIRS**

**\*\*\*MONDAY, FEBRUARY 23 GREAT LENT BEGINS\*\*\***

**SUNDAY, MARCH 01 NO SERVICE**

**SUNDAY, MARCH 09 OBEDNITZA UPSTAIRS**

**SUNDAY, MARCH 16 NO SERVICE**