



# ALL-MERCIFUL SAVIOR MISSION NEWSLETTER

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## 23<sup>RD</sup> SUNDAY OF PENTECOST, NOV. 27, 2005

civil date / church date



## THIS WEEK'S CALENDAR

Nov. 27 / Nov. 14	<b>SUNDAY</b>	23rd after Pentecost.	Tone 6. Holy Apostle Philip.	<b>Service 10 a.m.</b>
Nov. 28 / Nov. 15	Monday	<i>Fast, FOW*</i>	<b>Nativity Fast begins today.</b> St. Herman of Alaska, monk.	
Nov. 29 / Nov. 16	Tuesday	<i>Fast, FOW*</i>	Holy Apostle & Evangelist Matthew.	
Nov. 30 / Nov. 17	Wednesday	<i>Fast</i>	St. Gregory the Wonder-worker, of Neo-Caesarea	
Dec. 1 / Nov. 18	Thursday	<i>Fast, FOW*</i>	St. Plato, martyr of Ancyra.	
Dec. 2 / Nov. 19	Friday	<i>Fast</i>	St. Abdias (Obadiah) the Prophet. St. Hilarion of Georgia.	
Dec. 3 / Nov. 20	Saturday	<i>Fast, FOW*</i>	St. Proclus, archbishop of Constantinople.	<b>Vigil 6:30 p.m.</b>

\* *Fast, OW* means that oil and wine are allowed that day. \**Fast, FOW* means fish is also allowed that day.

## THE LORD IS COMING

Today begins the forty-day season of the Nativity Fast, or Christmas Lent, which for Orthodox Christians is of the greatest importance. By this season (there is a handy Western term for it, *Advent*) we prepare our hearts for the coming (advent) of the Word of God, our Lord Jesus Christ—His coming into the world, into the manger, into our hearts, into our families, into our homes, into our thoughts, into our souls, into our actions, into our very perception of life. Now we know that when a guest is coming to our homes, we clean house. But for such a great guest as God Himself, no ordinary house-cleaning is sufficient. We must fast and pray and cleanse our souls with tears of repentance across the coming forty days (which begin tomorrow, Monday) so that nothing is left in our lives that would disgust the King when He arrives.

Our Lord, King, and Savior comes to us in many ways. He comes to us daily and hourly and by the minute, in Grace, whenever we turn towards His light from the darkness of this fallen world. He comes to us first and foremost—most directly and literally of all—when we partake of the Most Holy Mysteries of His Body and Blood. For in Communion we truly take God Incarnate upon our tongues and He lives within us. He comes to us in the Holy Scriptures, which are a kind of invisible communion with Him. He draws near to us by means of His ministers, the ones whom He sends to us—the Priest, for example; also, our Guardian Angels; and in fact in each true servant of God He makes to cross our paths. Yet even after all these multifarious ways of coming to us, He comes in a special way at the time of the Nativity. Two thousand years ago our Lord and God, the Word and Son of God, having become a man by the conception of the Most Holy Mother of God in her womb, by the overshadowing power of the Holy Spirit, the Lord Jesus was born miraculously, without causing His Mother any pain, in the cave of Bethlehem. Then He came into the world incarnate (which means “in the flesh”), and this sublime First Coming is realized for us, is imparted to our minds and souls, by the mystery of the Church’s celebration of the Nativity. By the grace of the Church’s mysteries, at Nativity the intervening two thousand years are torn down, and we stand by the manger in adoration together with the shepherds of Bethlehem’s fields. Then the Lord allays our pain of heart with the joy of His presence. But we should note that before the shepherds were worthy to see God in the flesh, they were keeping watch over their flocks by night. And before we can be worthy to behold God Incarnate, we too must keep watch—not over sheep, goats, or cattle, but over the bestial passions which rise up in us. We must guard our hearts against them with the care of a diligent shepherd. And we must keep watch at night, that is, during the night of the Nativity Fast, until the dawn of Jesus’ First Coming shines upon us.

Strengthened by Our Lord’s First Coming, may we be alert. May we live as watchmen on watch, because when we least expect it we will experience the end of the world (either through death or through the destruction of Antichrist; for each human soul either one truly spells the end of the world) and then we will meet in awe the Fearful Second Coming of Our

Lord into the world, His coming for judgment, His coming for eternity and in all power. May we meet Him—when He comes then on the clouds amidst all the Angels and Saints—with love, with fear, with trust in His mercy, with the clear witness of a pure conscience. Amen! —by Fr. Aidan (Keller)

## SAINTS OF NOVEMBER 14

**Holy Apostle Philip:** Philip was born in Bethsaida beside the Sea of Galilee, as were Peter and Andrew. Instructed in Holy Scripture from his youth, Philip immediately responded to the call of the Lord Jesus and followed Him (John 1:43). After the descent of the Holy Spirit, Philip zealously preached the Gospel throughout many regions in Asia and Greece. In Greece, the Jews wanted to kill him, but the Lord saved him by His mighty miracles. Thus, a Jewish high priest that rushed at Philip to beat him was suddenly blinded and there was an earthquake during which Philip's persecutor was swallowed alive. Many other miracles were manifested, especially the healing of the sick, by which many pagans believed in Christ. In Hierapolis, St. Philip found himself in common evangelical work with his sister Mariamna, St. John the Theologian, and Apostle Bartholomew. In this town there was a dangerous snake that the pagans diligently fed and worshiped as a god. God's apostle killed the snake through prayer as though with a spear, but instead of being grateful the ignorant people seized Philip and crucified him upside-down on a tree, and then Bartholomew as well. At that, the earth opened up and swallowed the judge and many other pagans. In great fear, the people rushed to rescue the crucified apostles, but only Bartholomew was still alive; Philip had already breathed his last. The relics of St. Philip were later translated to Rome. This wonderful apostle suffered in the year 86 in the time of Emperor Dometian.

**St. Gregory Palamas:** Gregory's father was an eminent official at the court of Emperor Andronicus II Palæologus. The gifted Gregory, completing his secular studies, did not want to enter the service of the imperial court, but withdrew to the Holy Mountain and was tonsured a monk. He lived a life of asceticism in the Monastery of Vatopedi and the Great Lavra. He led the struggle against the heretic Barlaam and finally defeated him. He was consecrated as Metropolitan of Thessalonica in the year 1347. He is glorified as an ascetic, a theologian, a hierarch and a miracle-worker. He governed the Church in Thessalonica for 13 years, of which he spent one year in slavery to Muslims. He entered peacefully into rest in 1360, and took up his habitation in the Kingdom of Christ. His relics repose in Thessalonica.

**St. Justinian, Emperor:** Justinian was a Slav by birth. He succeeded to the throne of his uncle Justin in 527. The greatness of this emperor is inseparably bound to his profound faith in Orthodoxy; he believed, and lived according to his faith. During Great Lent, he neither ate bread nor drank wine but ate only vegetables and drank water, and that, just every other day. He waged war against the barbarians of the Danube because they castrated their captives. This reveals his elevated feeling of love for his fellow man. Justinian was fortunate and successful both in wars and in his works. He built many great and beautiful churches, the most beautiful of which was Hagia Sophia ("Holy Wisdom") in Constantinople. He collected and published the Laws of Rome and also personally issued many strict laws against immorality and licentiousness. He composed the Church hymn "Only-begotten Son and Word of God," which has been sung during the Divine Liturgy since the year 536. He convened the Fifth Ecumenical Council (553). He died peacefully in deep old age and inherited a portion in the everlasting Empire of Jesus Christ our Saviour.

—From the Prologue From Ochrid, St. Nikolai Velimirovitch

## NEWS

- You can order delicious, high-quality coffee from Haiti for only \$15 a pound, and support the Haitian Orthodox Mission headed by Fr. Gregory Williams. The coffee is grown organically, purchased directly from a peasant-owned collective, and the roasted whole beans are vacuum-bagged. Just send your order (\$15 per pound, for shipping and handling \$5 for 1 or 2 packages; call 615/536-5239 for shipping cost of larger quantities) to: Haitian Orthodox Mission, attn: Mission Bleu Coffees, 1180 Orthodox Way, Liberty, TN 37095. It makes a nice gift.

## SCRIPTURES THIS WEEK

Today: Ephesians 2:4-10, Luke 10:25-37

Mon. 1 Timothy 1:1-7; Luke 14:12-15

Tue. 1 Timothy 1:8-14; Luke 14:25-35

Wed. 1 Timothy 1:18-20, 2:8-15; Luke 15:1-10

Thu. 1 Timothy 3:1-13; Luke 16:1-9

Fri. 1 Timothy 4:4-8, 16; Luke 16:15-18, 17:1-4

Sat. Galatians 1:3-10; Luke 9:37-43

**Troparion, tone 8.** O All-Merciful Saviour, Thou Luminary like the sun: | Through the light of Thy radiance grant us eloquence, | that with pure conscience we may sing praises on Thy feast all-divine, | glorifying Thee the only-begotten Son, and the consubstantial Spirit; | for Thou givest us peace and great mercy.

**Kontakion, t. 4.** I committed every abomination, O All-Merciful Saviour, | and fell into the pit of despair. | Yet I groan from the depths of my heart | and cry to Thee, O Word: | Hasten, O Merciful One, | and quickly help us, | for merciful art Thou!

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