



Nativity of Our Lord Orthodox Church

<http://nativityorthodox.com/>

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*Let all who enter our Holy Church heed the words of the Cherubic Hymn:
“Let us now lay aside all earthy cares”*

*The reason why God has accorded us this present life is to give us a place for repentance.
Were this not the case,
a person who sinned would at once be deprived of this life.
For otherwise of what use would it be to him?
St. Gregory Palamas*

DAILY SCRIPTURE READING &
LIVES OF THE SAINTS
SAINTS AND FEASTS
Sunday before Holy Cross
Menodora, Metrodora, & Nymphodora the Martyrs
Poulcheria the Empress
Afterfeast of the Nativity of the Theotokos

ΑΩ

Prayers & Readings

Prayer Before Reading Holy Scripture

O Master Who loves mankind, illuminate our hearts with the pure light of Your divine knowledge and open the eyes of our mind to understand the teachings of Your Gospel. Instill in us also the fear of Your blessed commandments, that we may overcome all carnal desires, entering upon a spiritual life and understanding and acting in all things according to Your holy will. For You are the enlightenment of our

souls and bodies, O Christ God, and to You we give glory together with Your eternal Father and Your all-holy, gracious and life-giving Spirit, now and ever and forever. Amen.

Epistle Reading

The reading is from St. Paul's Letter to the Galatians 6:11-18

Brethren, see with what large letters I am writing to you with my own hand. It is those who want to make a good showing in the flesh that would compel you to be circumcised, and only in order that they may not be persecuted for the cross of Christ. For even those who receive circumcision do not themselves keep the law, but they desire to have you circumcised that they may glory in your flesh. But far be it from me to glory except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. For neither circumcision counts for anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation. Peace and mercy be upon all who walk by this rule, upon the Israel of God. Henceforth let no man trouble me; for I bear on my body the marks of Jesus. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brethren. Amen.

Gospel Reading

The Gospel According to John 3:13-17

The Lord said, "No one has ascended into heaven but he who descended from heaven, the Son of man who is in heaven. And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.

"For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God sent the Son into the world, not to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him."

1. The Holy Martyrs Menodora, Metrodora and Nymphodora

They were sisters by birth and grew up somewhere in Asian Bithynia. Reared in the spirit of Christianity, they withdrew from the city to the wilderness, wishing to elevate their minds to God and to free themselves of everything in this deceitful world, and to live this life in purity and virginity as true brides of Christ. They dedicated themselves to great labor, fasting and prayer, until God adorned them with the gift of miracle-working. When people began to bring the sick to them for healing, they became well known against their will. A certain governor, Fronton, heard of them and brought them to trial. Upon seeing them, the governor was amazed at the beauty of their faces. For, even though they were great fasters and their bodies were withered, their faces were radiant, illumined by inward peace and the grace of God. At first, the governor flattered them and promised to send them to the emperor, who would give them in marriage to his noblemen. But when he was convinced that all of his flattery and promises had no effect on these brides of Christ, he ordered that Menodora be tortured first, and her sisters thrown into prison. After cruel tortures, the governor cried out to Menodora, who was wounded and bloody: "Offer sacrifice to the gods!" To this the holy martyr replied: "Do you not see that I am offering my entire self as a sacrifice to my God?" When St. Menodora was slain by the tortures, the governor then brought out the remaining two sisters, and stood them by the dead body of Menodora. Pointing to the body of their sister, he counseled them to deny Christ. Since they remained steadfast, he slew them by harsh tortures. Just then, a thunderbolt struck from heaven, and killed the soulless Fronton and his servants. Christians honorably buried the bodies of these holy martyrs of God. They suffered between the years of 305 and 311, during the reign of Maximian Galerius, and found rest in the Kingdom of Christ.

2. Saint Pulcheria the Empress

She was the daughter of Emperor Arcadius. She vowed to remain a virgin for life, and, as a sign of this vow, she had an altar of gold and precious stones built in the cathedral church. She reigned with her brother, Theodosius the Younger. Pulcheria was a great zealot for the Orthodox Faith. At her insistence, the Third Ecumenical Council, which condemned the Nestorian heresy, was convened in Ephesus. She built the famous Church of the Holy Theotokos of Blachernae in Constantinople. Following the death of Theodosius, she married Marcian, the emperor-elect, but lived with him as with a brother. She discovered the relics of the Forty Martyrs of Sebaste. She reposed in the Lord on September 10, 453, at the age of fifty-five.

3. Saints Apollos, Lucius and Clement

Apostles Apollos, Lucius, and Clement were numbered among the Seventy. Apollos (Acts 18:24-25) was bishop in Smyrna before St. Polycarp. St. Lucius (Romans 16:21) was bishop in Laodicea. St. Clement was bishop in Sardis.

4. The Three Holy Women

A noblewoman from Constantinople, with her two servants, despised the vanity of the world and withdrew to solitude where, after eleven years of asceticism, they rested in the Lord.

HYMN OF PRAISE

The Holy Martyrs Menodora, Metrodora and Nymphodora

Three virgins, sisters by birth,
Three glorious martyrs of Christ,
Glorified Christ before Fronton.
By their fearlessness, they frightened the governor;
And Governor Fronton, poor in wisdom,
Thought, as many others did,
That by force, fire and gallows
He would quickly change their Christian ways.
The governor thought: "All women are alike;
They will quickly change their faith!"
But the governor had deceived himself bitterly,
And was shamed by these Christian women.
Christ discriminates not between women and men-
His gives strength to all who serve Him:
The miraculous power of faith and hope,
The power of suffering, without bitter lamenting.
This power outlived the empire,
And was employed for thousands of years-
Employed but remained whole-
Everything is as weak as clay before it.
Menodora, and with her Metrodora,
And the youngest sister, Nymphodora,

Conquered the governor by God's might.
They gave their lives and glorified Christ;
They gave their lives, and remained alive.

REFLECTION

Examples of courage and patience displayed by martyred Christian women-thousands upon thousands of them-have shone with radiant glory on all the pages of the history of the Christian Church. However, as amazing as these examples of voluntary martyrs are, the examples of ascetics, known and unknown, are not a bit less amazing, for asceticism is nothing less than prolonged martyrdom. Paul, the Bishop of Monemvasia, has given to posterity an instructive example of women ascetics. While he was still a layman and a collector of the royal tax, it happened that he stayed in a certain monastery. Seeing ravens landing on the fruit trees, breaking off branches with fruit and carrying them away, Paul wondered at this, and followed them with the monks to see where they were taking the fruit. Going thus, they came upon an impassable forest. The ravens landed at the bottom, deposited the broken fruit branches, and quickly returned. Paul and the monks investigated, and discovered a cave in which three women ascetics were living. The oldest one related their life story to them: She was of noble birth, from Constantinople. When her husband died, another nobleman wanted to take her as his wife by force. However, she decided that after the death of her first husband she would spend the remainder of her life in chastity. Therefore she distributed her wealth to the poor and fled to this deserted place with two of her maidservants. They lived there for eleven years in fasting and prayer, seeing no one and seen by no one but God. God the Provider arranged for the birds to bring them fruit for nourishment. Then they asked the abbot to bring them Holy Communion. Three days after they had received Holy Communion, all three of these holy women reposed, and the monks honorably buried them.

CONTEMPLATION

Contemplate the riches and glory of Solomon (I Kings 5:5-10):

1. How Solomon built a majestic Temple to God and then built cities and ships;
2. How the neighboring rulers were amazed at Solomon; how Hiram served him and the Queen of Sheba visited him;
3. How Solomon, in all his glory, was not arrayed as gloriously as a lily of the field.

HOMILY

On how sinful men prefer to receive an evil doer rather than a doer of good

I am come in My Father's name, and ye receive Me not: if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive (John 5:43).

Who is this "other" who will come in his own name, and whom sinful men will prefer to receive rather than Christ the Lord? It is he who does not carry the cross and does not walk the narrow path; he who is not a lover of man but rather a hater of man; he who does not struggle against sin but rather struggles for sin; he who loves impurity and spreads impurity; he who is a soldier of eternal death and not of eternal life; he who flatters the godless and loves every passion and vice: he is Antichrist. He will come in his own name and not in the name of God, and all those who did not receive Christ will receive him. He will be more dear to them, for he will embrace all their crooked and sinful paths. He will be more dear to them than Christ, for alongside the difficult path of Christ he will build a path smooth as ice, over which men will easily slide, not thinking about the abyss to which it leads them. The Lord Jesus Christ came in the

name of the eternal salvation of men, eternal life, eternal truth and eternal justice. Antichrist will come in his own name, that is, in the name of eternal destruction, death, falsehood and injustice. When the Antichrist comes among his own, his own will gladly receive him. In fact, all those for whom Christ is difficult will gladly receive Antichrist, for he and his path will appear easy to them. Only when it is too late will the foolish see that they were deceived, but there will be no salvation for them. When they begin to slide into eternal night, into the jaws of the fetid serpent, then it will be too late; repentance will not be accepted and there will be no salvation. The foolish banquet of earthly sinners and Antichrist will be over quickly, in the blink of an eye, and the house of impure joy will turn into a hopeless prison of remorse and misery. Then it will be too late.

O man-loving Lord, the only friend of man, Thee only do we know and recognize. Thee, only Thee, do we receive as our Savior and salvation.

To Thee be glory and praise forever. Amen.

Post-Communion Prayer

Prayer Of Saint Basil

I thank you, Christ and Master our God, King of the ages and Creator of all things, for all the good gifts you have given me, and especially for the participation in your pure and life-giving mysteries. I, therefore, pray to you, good and loving Lord: keep me under your protection and under the shadow of your wings. Grant that to my last breath I may with a pure conscience partake worthily of your gifts for the forgiveness of sins and for eternal life. For you are the bread of life, the source of holiness, the giver of all good things, and to you we give glory, with the Father and the Holy Spirit, now and forever and to the ages of ages. Amen.

Sixth Hour Prayers

O You Who on the sixth day and hour nailed to the cross the sin which rebellious Adam committed in Paradise, Tear asunder also the bond of our iniquities, O Christ our God, and save us.

Prayer of St. Basil

God, Lord of hosts and Maker of all creation, who in Your great compassion and mercy sent down Your Only-Begotten Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, for the redemption of mankind and by His precious Cross destroyed the record of our sins, triumphing over the source and power of darkness: O Lord and Lover of mankind, accept also the thanksgiving and fervent prayers of us sinners. Deliver us from every dark and harmful transgression and from all the visible and invisible enemies that seek to destroy us. Nail our flesh to the fear of You, and do not incline our hearts to deceitful words or thoughts, but wound our souls with love for You, that always looking to You, guided by Your light, and seeing You, the eternal and ineffable Light, we may give You unceasing praise and thanksgiving: to the Father without beginning, with Your Only-Begotten Son and Your all-holy, good and life-giving Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

*O LORD, SAVE THY PEOPLE AND BLESS THINE INHERITANCE.
GRANT VICTORY OVER THEIR ENEMIES TO ORTHODOX CHRISTIANS,
AND PROTECT THY PEOPLE WITH THY CROSS.*

DIVINE LITURGIES
Wednesday – 10:00 A.M.

Spanish Liturgy – Saturday – 6:30 P.M.
Sunday Matins – 9:00 A.M.

Sunday English Divine Liturgy – 10:00 A.M.

VESPERS

Saturday – 5:00 P.M.

CONFESSIONS

Monday-Friday, 4:00-6:00 P.M.

By appointment

Before Sunday Divine Liturgy (during Matins)

ORTHODOX WORKER MEALS

FRIDAYS – 11:30 A.M TO 1:00

P.M

Either the demons tempt us themselves or they equip those who do not fear the Lord to act against us: themselves, when we are alone, away from others, just as they tempted the Lord in the desert; through others, when we associate with them, as they tempted the Lord through the Pharisees. It is for us to look to our model and beat them back on both fronts.

St. Maximus the Confessor

Α Ω

For all that we have –

That so many nations and people do not have...

We should all say...

GOD BLESS AMERICA

&

GOD BLESS HIS GRACE BISHOP GREGORY

Α Ω

MIND THE SPIRITUAL GAP!

WHEN DID YOU LAST
INITIATE THE HOLY MYSTERY
OF REPENTANCE?

*

IF YOU WANT TO KNOW
WHAT IS OCCURRING IN
GOD'S CHURCH, ATTEND AND
PARTICIPATE IN HIS CHURCH.

“Only two kinds of men publicly admit to doing evil: those who repent of their deeds and are willing to accept the consequences for having acted wrongly, and those who are comfortable with their conduct and believe that no serious consequences will come from divulging it”