



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

Judgment Sunday (Meatfare Sunday)
Blaise the Holy Martyr of Sebastia
Theodora the Empress

Finding of the relics of Zachariah the Prophet, Father of the Holy Forerunner

ΛΩ

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 First Letter to the Corinthians 8:8-13; 9:1-2

Brethren, food will not commend us to God. We are no worse off if we do not eat, and no better off if we do. Only take care lest this liberty of yours somehow become a stumbling block to the weak. For if any one sees you, a man of knowledge, at table in an idol's temple, might he not be encouraged, if his conscience is weak, to eat food offered to idols? And so by your knowledge this weak man is destroyed, the brother for whom Christ died. Thus, sinning against your brethren and wounding their conscience when it is weak, you sin against Christ. Therefore, if food is a cause of my brother's falling, I will never eat meat, lest I cause my brother to fall.

Am I not free? Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord? Are not you my workmanship in the Lord? If to others I am not an apostle, at least I am to you; for you are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord.

Gospel Reading

Judgment Sunday (Meatfare Sunday)

The Gospel According to Matthew 25:31-46

The Lord said, "When the Son of man comes in his glory and all the holy angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate them one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, and he will place the sheep at his right hand, but the goats at the left. Then the king will say to those at his right hand, 'Come, O blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.' Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?' And the King will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me.' Then he will say to those at his left hand, 'Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels; for I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink, I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not clothe me, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.' Then they also will answer, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to you?' Then he will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it not to one of the least of these, you did it not to me.' And they will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."

1. THE PRIESTLY-MARTYR BLAISE

Blaise was born in the Province of Cappadocia. From his early childhood, he was God-fearing and meek. Because of his great virtues, he was chosen as bishop of the city of Sebastea [in Armenia]. Blaise was a great spiritual and moral beacon in this pagan city. At the time of a grave persecution of Christians, St. Blaise encouraged his flock and visited the martyrs of Christ in prison, especially among them was the eminent and glorious Eustratius. When the city of Sebastea was completely depleted of Christians - some were slain, and others fled - the Elder Blaise withdrew to Mt. Argeos and settled there in a cave. Wild

beasts recognized the holy man, gathered around him and he tenderly caressed them. But the persecutors found the saint in this remote place and brought him to trial. Along the way, Blaise cured a young boy who had a bone caught in his throat. To the plea of the poor widow whose pig had been snatched by a wolf, the saint, by the power of his prayer, commanded the wolf to return it. The sinister judges tortured Blaise severely: flogging him and scrapping him with an iron comb. By his steadfastness in the Faith of Christ, Blaise converted many pagans to the Faith. Seven women and two children languished in prison with him. The women were beheaded first and, after that, the wonderful Blaise with these two children was beheaded. He suffered and was glorified in the year 316 A.D. People pray to St. Blaise for the well being of their domestic livestock and for protection against wild beasts. However, in the west, he is also invoked for diseases of the throat.

2. THE HOLY MARTYR GEORGE OF KRATOVO

By origin, George was a Serb from the town of Kratovo. He was a silversmith by trade and, in his heart and soul, was a convinced and a devout Christian. George was eighteen years old when the Turks tried to convert him to Islam. George remained as firm as a diamond in his faith. The Turks tortured him with many cruel tortures and finally burned him at the stake. He suffered for the beautiful Faith of Christ on February 11, 1515 A.D. in Sofia, Bulgaria, during the reign of Sultan Selim and was glorified with unfading glory in the heavens.

2. SAINT THEODORA

Theodora, a Greek empress, was the wife of the nefarious Emperor Theophilus the Iconoclast. After the death of Theophilus, Theodora became the ruling empress and reigned together with her son Michael III. At the Council in Constantinople (842 A.D.), she immediately restored the veneration of icons. On this occasion, the Feast of the Triumph of Orthodoxy was instituted which is still celebrated today on the First Sunday of the Honorable Fast [First Sunday in Lent]. This holy and meritorious woman of the Church gave up her soul to God on February 11, 867 A.D. It was at that time, by the divine and wonderful Providence of God, at the solemn triumph of Orthodoxy over all heresies, that St. Cyril and St. Methodius were sent as Christian missionaries to the Slavs.

HYMN OF PRAISE THE VENERATION OF ICONS

To what, in such a manner, do you my Christian bow,
When you, O my Christian, venerate the icons?
Before the Living God the Creator, I am bowing down,
With all my soul, heart and mind, I bow down to Him.
Mortal am I and, am unable upon Him to gaze,
Therefore, before His image I bow;
What, my Christian, do you so fervently reverence,
When, the icon O my Christian, you kiss?
Christ the God and Savior, I am kissing,
The choirs of angels, the saints and the Mother of God.
Mortal am I and, therefore am unable them to touch,
But when their images I kiss, my heart is at ease.

REFLECTION

Matter is not evil of itself as certain Christian heretics, i.e., the Manicheans and other philosophers taught. Not only is matter not evil, but matter is not the sole conduit of evil, but in as much as matter is a conduit, so also is the spirit a conduit of evil. Every material thing is melancholic and even fearful because of man's sins, but matter is not evil. Matter is corruptible, weak and nothingness in comparison to the immortal spirit, but it is not evil of itself. And, if it were evil, would our Lord Christ have instituted Holy Communion of Bread and Wine and would He call the Bread and the Wine His Body and His Blood? If matter, by itself, is evil, how then, would men be baptized with water? How would the Apostle James have commanded that the sick be anointed with oil? How would Blessed Water [Holy Water] remain beyond spoiling and have miracle-working properties? How would the Cross of Christ have power? How would the garment of Christ transmit the healing power of the Savior by which the woman with the issue of blood was healed? How would the relics of the saints and icons have performed so many miracles and conveyed so much good to people from the kingdom of Grace? Therefore, how then could good come to man through evil? No, no; matter is never evil of itself alone.

CONTEMPLATION

To contemplate the Lord Jesus as a Good Merchant Who came into this world as to a market to give and to take:

1. To give His labor and to receive the numerous fruits of joy from that labor;
2. To give Himself to be humiliated, to be spat upon, to be smitten, to be bruised, to be pierced, to be crucified in order to usher the army of His faithful into His eternal glory;
3. To give His Body in order to redeem numerous souls from the multitudes.

HOMILY

About judging according to the flesh and according to the spirit

"You judge according to the flesh"(St. John 8:15).

Thus spoke the Omniscience Lord to the wicked Jews: "You judge according to the flesh." They had caught a woman in adultery and wanted to stone her because of her fleshly sin. But the Lord perceived the soul of the woman and saw that she could still be saved and changed, brought her to repentance and released her. For even though she committed the act of adultery, nevertheless, her soul was not totally adulterous. However, the Pharisees constantly bore the sin of adultery in their hearts but they skillfully concealed that sin of adultery and they did not condemn adultery in the heart but condemned the act of adultery of the flesh only against those whom they caught in that act.

Spiritual men judge by the spirit and physical men judge by the flesh. Even today, the Jews, punished and dispersed throughout the whole world, were never able to think spiritually and to judge spiritually, but still think and judge only by the flesh and only externally according to the ordinance of the Law written on paper or in nature, but still never according to the spirit. For, if they had learned to judge men and deeds according to the spirit, they would have immediately recognized the Lord Jesus as the Messiah and Savior.

Let us be on guard, O Christians, that we judge not only according to the flesh. Let us be on guard that we not be too quick to judge him who because of his ineptness slips into misdeed, nor to praise the one who adheres skillfully and does not slip before men but, who, with his heart is already completely in the abyss

of sin. Let us be on guard from error, that we not judge men and nature according to sensual impressions and to strive to judge everything spiritually, i.e., by the spirit. Behold we are the children of the spirit and light, for we are baptized.

O Lord Jesus teach us and guide us that we do not think nor judge according to the flesh but rather by the spirit.

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 – 8:50 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”