



Nativity of Our Lord Orthodox Church

<http://nativityorthodox.com/>

8911 Weems Road
Manassas, Virginia 20110

Fr. Nectarios Trevino
opriest@gmail.com
703.629.0414

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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
14th Sunday of Luke
The Holy Prophet Sophonias (Zephaniah)
Our Righteous Father John, Bishop and Hesychast
Holy Martyrs Agapius and Seleucius

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 Ephesians 5:8-19

Brethren, walk as children of light (for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true), and try to learn what is pleasing to the Lord. Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them. For it is a shame even to speak of the things that they do in secret; but when anything is exposed by the light it becomes visible, for anything that becomes visible is light. Therefore it is said, "Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give you light." Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise, making the most of the time, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery; but be filled with the Spirit, addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with all your heart.

Gospel Reading

The Gospel According to Luke 18:35-43

At that time, as Jesus drew near to Jericho, a blind man was sitting by the roadside begging; and hearing a multitude going by, he inquired what this meant. They told him, "Jesus of Nazareth is passing by." And he cried, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" And those who were in front rebuked him, telling him to be silent; but he cried out all the more, "Son of David, have mercy on me!" And Jesus stopped, and commanded him to be brought to him; and when he came near, he asked him, "What do you want me to do for you?" He said, "Lord, let me receive my sight." And Jesus said to him, "Receive your sight; your faith has made you well." And immediately he received his sight and followed him, glorifying God; and all the people, when they saw it, gave praise to God.

1. The Holy Prophet Zephaniah

Zephaniah was a native of Mount Sarabatha, from the tribe of Simeon. He lived and prophesied in the seventh century before Christ, at the time of Josiah the pious king of Judah. Zephaniah was a contemporary of the Prophet Jeremiah. Having great humility and a pure mind raised to God, he was found worthy of discerning the future. He prophesied the day of the wrath of God and the punishment of Gaza, Ashkalon, Ashdod, Ekron, Nineveh, Jerusalem and Egypt. He saw Jerusalem as a filthy and polluted, ... oppressing city.... Her princes within her are roaring lions; her judges are evening wolves; ... her prophets are light and treacherous persons: her priests have polluted the sanctuary, they have done violence to the Law (Zephaniah 3:1-4). Foreseeing the advent of the Messiah, he enthusiastically exclaimed: Sing, O daughter of Zion; shout, O Israel; be glad and rejoice with all the heart, O daughter of Jerusalem (Zephaniah 3:14). This seer of mysteries entered into rest at his birthplace to await the General Resurrection and his reward from God.

2. Saint John the Silent [the Hesychast]

John was a native of Nicopolis in Armenia and was the son of Encratus and Euphemia. He was tonsured a monk at the age of eighteen and lived a strict and resolute life of asceticism, cleansing his heart by his many tears, fasting and prayer. After ten years, he was appointed bishop of Colonia. By his example, he attracted his brother Pergamius and his uncle Theodore-both distinguished men at the imperial courts of

Emperors Zeno and Justinian-to a God-pleasing life. Seeing the malice and intrigues of this world and his inability to put matters right, he abandoned his episcopal throne. He disguised himself as a simple monk and went to the Monastery of St. Sava the Sanctified near Jerusalem. There he remained unknown for many years, conscientiously and capably completing every task that the abbot ordered him to do. For this, St. Sava recommended to Patriarch Elias that he ordain him a presbyter. When the patriarch wanted to ordain John, he confessed that he already possessed the rank of bishop. Then St. John closed himself in a cell and spent years and years in silence and prayer. Afterward he spent nine years in the wilderness feeding himself only on wild vegetables, and then he returned to the monastery. He turned the faithful away from the heresy of Origen and contributed greatly to the condemnation and elimination of this heresy. He clearly discerned the spiritual world and healed people from sickness. Having conquered himself, he easily conquered demons. Great in humility, might and divine wisdom, this servant of God entered peacefully into rest in the year 558 at the age of 104.

3. The Hieromartyr Theodore, Archbishop of Alexandria

After functioning as patriarch for two years, Theodore was ridiculed and tortured by the pagans. They placed a crown of thorns on his head and finally beheaded him for his Faith in the year 606.

4. The Venerable Theodulus

Theodulus was an eminent patrician at the court of Theodosius the Great. After the death of his wife, he renounced the vanity of the world and withdrew from Constantinople to a pillar near Ephesus, where he lived a life of asceticism for thirty years.

5. The Venerable Sava of Zvenigorod

Sava was a disciple of St. Sergius of Radonezh and a great miracle-worker. Following his death, he appeared to many as though he were alive, at times teaching them, at times reproaching them and at times healing them. He passed from this life to a better life in the year 1406.

HYMN OF PRAISE

Saint John the Silent

John the Silent, God's laborer,
Walked through the wilderness as a lonely hermit,
Until someone cried out: "The barbarians are coming!
Behold how the dust rises up on the road!
They are near, very near; rise up, rise!"
"Let them be near, but God is nearer!"
John said to him, and did not move.
And when misfortune sought to overtake him,
A lion appeared, sent by God,
And began to fiercely roar at the enemy.
The horde fled; John did not move.
He competed with the severe wilderness,
He competed with her in stillness,
And in dryness and solitude.

“Pascha is coming, how shall we greet it?
What shall we eat on the feast, Father?”
The disciple asked. And John said to him:
“To every creature, God gives food.”
When the Radiant Feast of Christ dawned,
An angel suddenly appeared as a man before the saint;
Bread, wine and honey he brought.
The disciple, when he beheld the miracle,
Wept at his lack of faith,
And glorified God and God's saint.

REFLECTION

God hears the prayers of the righteous and fulfills them, sometimes immediately and completely, and at other times only later, at the appropriate time and according to the needs of the Church. In other words, in fulfilling the prayers of the righteous man, God has in mind either the man's salvation or the good of the whole Church. St. John the Silent prayed to God to reveal to him how the soul separates from the body at death. While still at prayer, he was taken outside himself and had the following vision: A good man died in front of a church in Bethlehem, and angels took his soul from his body and carried it to heaven with sweet singing. Coming to himself out of his ecstasy, John immediately set out on the road from the Monastery of St. Sava the Sanctified to Bethlehem. When he reached Bethlehem, he saw the dead body of the man exactly as he had seen it in his vision.

When the great St. Sava the Sanctified died, John grieved and wept. Sava appeared to him in a vision and said: “Do not grieve, Father John, for even though I am separated from you in the body, nevertheless I am with you in the spirit.” Then John begged him: “Father, pray to the Lord to take me with you.” To this Sava replied: “For now, this cannot be. A great trial has yet to befall the Lavra, and God wants you to remain in the body to comfort and strengthen the faithful against the heretics.” At first, John did not know what kind of heretics the holy father had spoken of, but he found out later, when the heresy of Origen began to shake the Church of God.

CONTEMPLATION

Contemplate the sinful fall of Adam and Eve (Genesis 3):

1. How, seeing themselves naked, they covered their nakedness with fig leaves;
2. How, even now, all unrepentant sinners, when they lose a virtue, feel naked and cover their nakedness with some sort of lie or fantasy.

HOMILY

on the two worlds

In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth (Genesis 1:1).

Brethren, whatever God desires to reveal to men is revealed, and whatever He does not desire to reveal remains concealed. Moses, the one who beheld God, could say nothing more about heaven than that in the beginning God created it. Having said that, he continued to describe in detail the creation of the earth. Why does Moses not speak in detail about the creation of heaven? Because God did not want to reveal any more to him, since the men of his time were neither mature enough nor capable of understanding

heavenly matters beyond their senses. Only when many centuries had passed and God's New Testament had come to men, did God reveal much more of the heavenly world to His faithful and chosen ones. Only Christians began to see the heavens opened. St. John the Theologian bears witness to this: After this I looked, and, behold, a door was opened in heaven (Revelation 4:1). St. Stephen the Protomartyr witnesses: Behold, I see the heavens opened (Acts 7:56). The Apostle Paul, who was caught up to the third heaven ... and heard unspeakable words (II Corinthians 12:2, 4), speaks of the angelic choirs, about the thrones, dominions, principalities and powers, and says: All things were created by Him, and for Him (Colossians 1:16). His disciple, St. Dionysius, describes the celestial hierarchy in as great a detail as Moses describes the earthly world at its creation. This is how the unfathomable wisdom of God wanted it; that which God did not wish to reveal to Moses, He revealed to the apostles and their followers. What could not be told to children is told to mature men. The revelation of mysteries came through spiritual maturity.

Here is a beautiful lesson for us all. Let us be diligent in seeking the truth, still more diligent in purifying our hearts, patient in waiting, and unwavering in faith that God will give us everything in due time, in the way and to the measure necessary for our salvation.

O Lord most-wise and man-loving, Who teaches us and leads us to salvation without rushing and without delay, to Thee, O Gracious One, be glory and praise.

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 – 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”