



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 of St. Gregory Palamas
Gerasimus the Righteous of Jordan
Paul & his sister Juliana and their Companions
Daniel, Prince of Moscow

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 Hebrews 1:10-14; 2:1-3

"IN THE BEGINNING, Thou, Lord, didst found the earth in the beginning, and the heavens are the work of thy hands; they will perish, but thou remainest; they will all grow old like a garment, like a mantle thou wilt roll them up, and they will be changed. But thou art the same, and thy years will never end." But to what angel has he ever said, "Sit at my right hand, till I make thy enemies a stool for thy feet?" Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to serve, for the sake of those who are to obtain salvation?

Therefore we must pay closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it. For if the message declared by angels was valid and every transgression or disobedience received a just retribution, how shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation? It was declared at first by the Lord, and it was attested to us by those who heard him.

Gospel Reading

Sunday of St. Gregory Palamas

The Gospel According to Mark 2:1-12

At that time, Jesus entered Capernaum and it was reported that he was at home. And many were gathered together, so that there was no longer room for them, not even about the door; and he was preaching the word to them. And they came, bringing to him a paralytic carried by four men. And when they could not get near him because of the crowd, they removed the roof above him; and when they had made an opening, they let down the pallet on which the paralytic lay. And when Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "My son, your sins are forgiven." Now some of the scribes were sitting there, questioning in their hearts, "Why does this man speak thus? It is a blasphemy! Who can forgive sins but God alone?" And immediately Jesus, perceiving in his spirit that they thus questioned within themselves, said to them, "Why do you question thus in your hearts? Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Rise, take up your pallet and walk? But that you may know that the Son of man has authority on earth to forgive sins'-he said to the paralytic-"I say to you, rise, take up your pallet and go home." And he rose, and immediately took up the pallet and went out before them all; so that they were all amazed and glorified God, saying, "We never saw anything like this!"

1. THE VENERABLE GERASIMUS

This remarkable and famous saint first learned about the ascetical life in the Egyptian Thebaid. He then went to the Jordan and there founded a community in which there were seventy monks. This community still exists today. He instituted a special Constitution [Rule] for his monastery by which the monks spent five days in their cells weaving baskets, reeds and rush mats. They were never allowed to light a fire in their cells. For five days they ate only a little dry bread and dates. The monks were required to keep their cells open so that when they went out, anyone could enter and remove whatever he needed from their cells. On Saturdays and Sundays they gathered in the monastic church. They had a common meal with a few vegetables and a little wine to the glory of God. Each monk would then bring in and place before the feet of the abbot that which he had made during the past five days. Each monk had only one robe. St. Gerasimus was an example to all. During the Great Lenten Fast he did not eat anything except what he received in Holy Communion. On one occasion, he saw a lion roaring from pain because there was a

thorn in his paw. Gerasimus drew near to the lion, crossed himself, and removed the thorn in the animal's paw. The lion became so tame that he returned with Gerasimus to the monastery and remained there until the elder's death. When Gerasimus died, the lion succumbed from sorrow for him. Gerasimus attended the Fourth Ecumenical Council [Chalcedon, 451 A.D.] during the reign of Marcian and Plucheria. Even though in the beginning, Gerasimus leaned toward the Monophysite heresy of Eutyches and Dioscorus, he was a great defender and champion of Orthodoxy at the Council. St. Euthymius dissuaded him from this heresy. Of all of the disciples of Gerasimus, the most famous was St. Cyriacus the Recluse. St. Gerasimus died in the year 475 A.D., and was translated into the eternal joy of his Lord.

2. THE HOLY MARTYRS PAUL AND JULIANA

Paul and Juliana were brother and sister from Ptolemais in Phoenicia. They were brutally tortured for the sake of Christ by the Emperor Aurelius and were finally beheaded. Before their martyrdom many of their miracles were manifested, and were witnessed by many pagans. Through these miracles, many of the pagans were converted to the Faith. Several of these were beheaded and received their wreaths in the year 273 A.D.

3. SAINT JAMES THE FASTER

He lived in the sixth century. He was so perfected in pleasing God that James cured the most gravely ill through his prayers. But the enemy of mankind lured him into great temptations. At one time, an immoral woman was sent to him by some scoffers. She misrepresented herself to James, pretending to be crying yet all the while luring him into sin. Seeing that he was going to yield to sin, James placed his left hand into the fire and held it there for some time until it was scorched. Seeing this, the woman was filled with fear and terror, repented and amended her life. On another occasion, James did not flee from his temptation, but rather he succumbs to a maiden, who was brought as a lunatic by her parents to be cured of her insanity. He, indeed, healed her and after that, sinned with her. Then in order to conceal his sin he killed her and threw her into a river. As is common, the steps from adultery to murder are not too distant. James lived for ten years after that as a penitent in an open grave. At that time there was a great drought which caused both people and live-stock to suffer. As a result of his prayers, rain fell; James knew that God had forgiven him. Here is an example, similar to that of David, of how twisted is the demon of evil; how by God's permission, the greatest spiritual giants can be overthrown, and through sincere and contrite penance, God, according to His mercy, forgives even the greatest sins and does not punish those when they punish themselves.

HYMN OF PRAISE

SAINT JAMES THE FASTER

Who from the greater height falls, is injured more,
To the heights whoever is lifted, let him cautiously shield himself.
The holy apostle writes: "Whoever thinks that he is standing secure
should take care not to fall," (*) let him fear God.
James the Faster, according to the height of his soul, a giant was he,
But, he, from the heights slipped, and the devil toppled him;
One sin, to the other hastens, adultery rushes to murder,
James the Faster, himself, punishes, and God comforted him.
All virtues, one sin, is able to erode;

One hole in the granary, all the wheat pours out.
A house filled with fragrances, one handful of filth
Empties it of redolence and fills it with stench.
One-hundred victories nor one-hundred celebrations do not help
When in the final battle, the head is lost.
The spiritual life is a struggle against the hordes of the devil,
In this battle, from the beginning the proud are defeated.
Whoever invokes the Name of God with profound humility
That one, in battle, will be protected by God's mercy.

(*) I Corinthians 10:12

REFLECTION

If the philosophies of men were able to satisfy man, why did the philosophers Justin and Origen become Christians? Why did Basil, Chrysostom and Gregory, who in Athens studying all the philosophy of the Greeks, receive baptism? And why did Blessed Augustine, who knew the wisdom of both the Greeks and the Romans, throw away all and seek salvation and illumination in the Faith of Christ? And St. Clement of Rome, who was very wealthy and very learned? And St. Catherine, who was from the royal house and knew all the worldly wisdom of the Egyptians? And the young Crown Prince Joasaph in India, to whom was known all the Indian philosophies? And many, many more who primarily sought explanations to the puzzles of the world and illumination for their souls in philosophy and, after that, entered the Church and worshipped the Lord Christ?

CONTEMPLATION

To contemplate the Mystery of Communion as the presence of our Lord Jesus in the Church on earth:

1. As the fulfillment of His promise, "And behold, I am with you always until the end of the age" (St. Matthew 28:20).
2. As His constant support of the faithful, to whom He said, "Without me, you can do nothing" (St. John 15:5).

HOMILY

About Pilate's wavering

"Consequently, Pilate tried to release Him, then, he handed Him over to be crucified" St. John 19:12,16).

From where does this contradiction in Pilate stem? From where is this dual will in one and the same man? While he stood under the radiant face of Christ, Pilate from all his heart wanted to release the Just Man. But, when the darkness of the Jews overcame him, he agreed to the works of darkness. This is the seed [Jesus Christ], fallen among the thorns. While the face of Christ shown on the seed, the seed took root, but as soon as the seed was left without this light, the darkness of the thorns smothered it. When the Lord Jesus authoritatively spoke to Pilate of the Heavenly Kingdom, saying to him, "You would have no power over Me, if it had not been given to you from above" (St. John 19:11), Pilate then felt overcome by the fear of God. But when the masses of the Jews cried out to Pilate, "If you release Him, you are not a friend of Caesar" (St. John 19:12), then Pilate was overcome with fear from the worldly king. His fear for the body overcame his fear for his soul, as it happens occasionally, even today. Pilate was a disciple of worldly wisdom. Worldly wisdom does not offer strength but instills fear. Worldly wisdom does not

sustain the soul but the body. Worldly wisdom does not instill fear for the soul but fear for the body and all that is physical. Here, in Pilate, we see an obvious and a pathetic example of what kind of men worldly wisdom produces and educates, sidestepping God and going against Christ. Pilate's weak character and wavering soul is a picture, not only of pagans, but also of weak Christians. Certain Christians daily, imperceptibly and, more often, unconsciously, would for a while like to eliminate Christ from the darkened and evil instinct of the Jews within themselves. Then, at other times, they would like to abandon Him to that instinct for crucifixion. This always happens when a Christian transgresses some of the commandments of Christ for the sake of fulfilling some of his own physical desires. For a moment, that commandment enlightens the heart of a wavering Christian and again, for a moment, the physical darkness overcomes him so much that he completely succumbs to it. O Lord, long-suffering, do not turn away the radiance of Your face from us even for one twinkling of the eye, so that the darkness does not overcome us.

O Lord help us that we will remain children of the light until the end.

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.

Before Sunday Divine Liturgy (during Matins)

CONFESSIONS

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

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

Λ 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

Λ 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”