



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
Thomas Sunday
Crescens the Martyr
Leonidas, Bishop of Athens
Michael the New Martyr of Smyrna

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 Acts of the Apostles 5:12-20

In those days, many signs and wonders were done among the people by the hands of the apostles. And they were all together in Solomon's Portico. None of the rest dared join them, but the people held them in high honor. And more than ever believers were added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women, so that they even carried out the sick into the streets, and laid them on beds and pallets, that as Peter came by at least his shadow might fall on some of them. The people also gathered from the towns around Jerusalem, bringing the sick and those afflicted with unclean spirits, and they were all healed. But the high priest rose up and all who were with him, that is, the party of the Sadducees, and filled with jealousy they arrested the apostles and put them in the common prison. But at night an angel of the Lord opened the prison doors and brought them out and said, "Go and stand in the temple and speak to the people all the words of this Life."

Gospel Reading

Thomas Sunday

The Gospel According to John 20:19-31

On the evening of that day, the first day of the week, the doors being shut where the disciples were for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said to them: "Peace be with you." When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I send you." And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and said to them: "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained."

Now Thomas, one of the twelve, called the Twin, was not with them when Jesus came. So the other disciples told him: "We have seen the Lord." But he said to them: "Unless I see in his hands the print of the nails, and place my finger in the mark of the nails, and place my hand in his side, I will not believe."

Eight days later, his disciples were again in the house, and Thomas was with them. The doors were shut, but Jesus came and stood among them, and said: "Peace be with you." Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side; do not be faithless, but believing." Thomas answered him, "My Lord and my God!" Jesus said to him, "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe."

Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in his name.

1. THE HOLY APOSTLES ARISTARCHUS, PUDENS AND TROPHIMUS

They were numbered among the Seventy Apostles. Aristarchus was bishop of Apamea in Syria. The Apostle Paul mentions him several times. "The city was filled with confusion and the people rushed with one accord into the theater, seizing Gaius and Aristarchus" (Acts of the Apostles 19:29). "Aristarchus, my fellow prisoner, sends you greetings, as does Mark the cousin of Barnabas (concerning whom you have

received instructions) if he comes to you, receive him" (Colossians 4:10). "Epaphras, my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus, greets you, as well as Mark, Aristarchus, Demas and Luke, my co-workers" (Philemon 1:23,24). Aristarchus was captured in Ephesus with Gaius by a multitude of people who had risen up against Paul. The Apostle Paul writes to the Colossians: "Aristarchus, my fellow prisoner sends you his greetings" (Colossians 4:10). In the Epistle to Philemon, Paul calls Aristarchus "my co-worker" together with Mark, Demas and Luke.

Pudens was a distinguished citizen of Rome. The Apostle Paul mentions him once. "Eubulus, Pudens, Linus, Claudia and all the brothers send greetings"(2 Timothy 4:21). At first, the home of Pudens was a haven for the Chief Apostles [Peter and Paul] and later it was converted into a place of worship, called the Shepherd's Church.

Trophimus was from Asia. "Sopater, the son of Pyrrhus, from Beroea, accompanied him, as did Aristarchus and Secundus from Thessalonica, Gaius from Derbe, Timothy and Tychicus and Trophimus from Asia" (Acts of the Apostles 20:4). He accompanied the apostle on his travel. In one place the Apostle Paul writes: "I left Trophimus sick at Miletus" (2 Timothy 4:20).

During the reign of Nero's persecution, when the Apostle Paul was beheaded, all three of these glorious apostles were also beheaded.

2. THE HOLY MARTYR SABAS OF GOTHLAND [SABAS THE GOTH]

In Gothland, there was a brutal persecution against Christians. A certain prince of the Goths [Atharidus] entered the village where this devout Sabas lived and asked the villagers: "Are there any Christians living in your village?" They convinced him by swearing that there are none. Then Sabas stood before the prince and the people and said: " Let no one swear for me; I am a Christian!" Upon seeing Sabas, wretched and poor, the prince let him go in peace saying: " This one can neither harm nor benefit anyone." The following year, around Easter, a certain priest Sansala came to this village and celebrated the glorious Feast of the Pascha [Resurrection] with Sabas. Upon learning of this, the heathens suddenly attacked the home of Sabas and began to beat this holy man of God unmercifully with canes and, besides this, they dragged the naked body of Sabas through thorns and then tied both Sabas and Sansala to a tree and offered them the meat of the idolatrous sacrifices to eat. These men of God called to mind the words of the apostles and refused to eat of the unclean sacrifices of the devil. Finally, Prince Atharidus condemned Sabas to death and handed him over to the soldiers. Full of joy, Sabas arrived at the scaffold praising God. Recognizing him as a good man, the soldiers wanted to release him along the way and, because of that, Sabas became very sorrowful and said to the soldiers that they are duty-bound to carry out the order of the prince. The soldiers then brought him to the Mussovo river [at Targoviste, Romania, near Bucharest] tied a stone around his neck and tossed him into the water. His body was washed up along the shore. Later on, during the reign of Emperor Valens when the Greek Commander Ioannis Soranos was warring with the Goths, he discovered the body of Sabas and translated it to Cappadocia. Sabas, the saint, suffered at the age of 31 in the year 372 A.D.

3. THE HOLY FEMALE MARTYRS BASILISSA AND ANASTASIA

Basilissa and Anastasia were two pious and devout Romans. During the reign of Emperor Nero, they gathered the slain bodies of the disciples of the apostles and buried them with honor. For this, they were accused and imprisoned. After prolonged torture, during which their breasts and tongues were severed, they were finally beheaded.

HYMN OF PRAISE
THE HOLY MARTYRS

Martyrs radiant, their blood they shed,
And the entire black earth, with their blood they stained
The fire was powerful in which they were burned,
But, more powerful the love, with which they loved Christ.
For the greatest good, a martyr to be
With what kind of riches, can this be compared?
All-victorious Christ, the King of that age,
Your brave souls in heaven welcomed.
From the hands of the angels, He took them to Himself,
And all your weighty pains, He blessed.

REFLECTION

Concerning contemplation, St. Gregory Sinaites writes: "We confirm that there are eight principle subjects for contemplation: First, God, invisible and unseen; without beginning and uncreated; the First Cause of everything that exists; Triune; the one and only pre-existing Divinity; Second, the order and rank of rational powers: [the bodiless powers of heaven; the angelic world]; Third, the composition of visible things; Fourth, the plan of the Incarnation of the Word; Fifth, the general resurrection; Sixth, the awesome second coming (Second Advent) of Christ; Seventh, eternal torment; Eighth, the Kingdom of Heaven. The first four have already been revealed and belong to the past. The last four have not yet been revealed and belong to the future, even though these four are clearly contemplated by those who, with the help of acquired Grace, attained complete purity of mind. Whosoever approaches this task of contemplation without the illumination of Grace, let him know that he is building fantasies and does not possess the art of contemplation." Thus wrote the great and discerning Gregory Sinaites who, that which he knows, he knows from personal experience.

CONTEMPLATION

To contemplate the resurrected Lord Jesus:

1. How he is concerned about the physical nourishment of His disciples; How He breaks and blesses bread for the disciples in Emmaus;
2. How by the shore of the lake he asked His disciples: "Have you caught anything to eat?" (St. John 21:5). When they answered Him that they have not, He prepared bread and fish and gave it to them.

HOMILY

About how we will resemble Him Whom we love

"Beloved, we are God's children now; what we shall be has not yet been revealed. We do know that when it is revealed we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is" (1 John 3:2).

Until now, we were slaves and now we are the children of God. We were the slaves of evil and now we

are the servants of good; the supreme good in heaven and on earth. We were slaves to all of that which is lower and worse than man and now, we will serve the All-Highest and the All-Good. We were squashed by darkness and now, we will labor in the light. Until now, the devil, sin and death held us in continual fear and now, we will live close to God in freedom and joy.

Now, when now? Now, when the Lord appeared on earth in the flesh, when He gave us the knowledge of light, freedom and life; when He gloriously resurrected and manifested Himself in His glorified body; when He fulfilled all the prophecies of the prophets and all of His promises. Now we, too, are the children of God: "The sons of light and the heirs of the Kingdom."

"We shall be like Him." Truly, this has not yet materialized but He has manifested Himself and, for now, that is sufficient. He Himself showed how beautiful man is in the resurrection and we know that we will also be the same as He. The Apostle John says: "We know that we shall be like Him." He does not say we suspect or it has been told to us but he does say: "We know that we shall be like Him." For He did not resurrect for His sake, but for our sake. He did not resurrect from the grave, only to show His power to the dead who are without hope, but to assure the dead that they, too, will live again and to show them how they will be when they become enlivened. Neither did the apostles write: "We know," because of their vanity before the ignorant, but because of brotherly love toward man, that all men may know the same and "that we may also know."

O resurrected Lord, confirm in us also this saving knowledge through the prayers of Your Holy Apostles.

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.
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”