



**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  
6th Sunday of Matthew  
The Holy Great Martyr Procopius  
Theophilus the Myrrhbearer of Pantokrator Monastery  
Appearance of the Icon of the Most Holy Theotokos of Kazan

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**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

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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 Romans 12:6-14

Brethren, having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith; if service, in our serving; he who teaches, in his teaching; he who exhorts, in his exhortation; he who contributes, in liberality; he who gives aid, with zeal; he who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness. Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good; love one another with brotherly affection; outdo one another in showing honor. Never flag in zeal, be aglow with the Spirit, serve the Lord. Rejoice in your hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the saints, practice hospitality. Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them.

### **Gospel Reading**

The Gospel According to Matthew 9:1-8

At that time, getting into a boat Jesus crossed over and came to his own city. And behold, they brought to him a paralytic, lying on his bed; and when Jesus saw their faith he said to the paralytic, "Take heart, my son; your sins are forgiven." And behold, some of the scribes said to themselves, "This man is blaspheming." But Jesus, knowing their thoughts, said, "Why do you think evil in your hearts? For which is easier, to say 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say 'Rise and walk?' But that you may know that the Son of man has authority on earth to forgive sins" he then said to the paralytic -- "Rise, take up your bed and go home." And he rose and went home. When the crowds saw it, they were afraid, and they glorified God, who had given such authority to men.

#### 1. THE HOLY GREAT MARTYR SAINT PROCOPIUS

Procopius was born in Jerusalem of a father who was a Christian and a mother who was a pagan. At first, his name was Neanias. Following the death of his father, the mother raised her son completely in the spirit of Roman idolatry. When Neanias matured, Emperor Diocletian saw him and, at once, took a liking to him and brought him to his palace for military service. When this nefarious emperor began to persecute Christians, he ordered Neanias to go to Alexandria with a garrison of soldiers and there to exterminate the Christians. But, on the road, something happened to Neanias similar to that which happened to Saul [Paul]. In the third hour of the night there was a strong earthquake and, at that moment, the Lord appeared to him and a voice was heard: "Neanias, where are you going and against whom are you rising up?" In great fear, Neanias asked: "Who are You Lord? I am unable to recognize You." At that moment, a glowing cross as if of crystal appeared in the air and from the cross there came a voice saying: "I am Jesus, the crucified Son of God." And further, the Lord said to him: "By this sign that you saw, conquer your enemies and My peace will be with you." That experience completely turned him around and changed the life of Commander Neanias. He issued an order to make the same kind of cross which he saw and instead of going against the Christians he, with his soldiers, turned against the Agarians who were attacking Jerusalem. He entered Jerusalem as a victor and declared to his mother that he is a Christian. Being brought before the court, Neanias removed his commander's belt and sword and tossed them before the judge thereby showing that he is only a soldier of Christ the King. After great tortures he was cast into prison where the Lord Christ, again, appeared to him, baptized him and gave him the name Procopius. One day twelve women appeared before his prison window and said to him: "We too are the servants of Christ." Accused of this they were thrown into the same prison where St. Procopius taught them the Faith

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of Christ and particularly about how they will receive the martyr's wreath. For that reason in the marriage ritual of the betrothed, St. Procopius is mentioned along with the God-crowned Emperor Constantine and Empress Helena. After this, those twelve women were brutally tortured. Witnessing their suffering and bravery, the mother of Procopius also believed in Christ and all thirteen were slain. When St. Procopius was led to the scaffold, he raised his hands toward the east and prayed to God for all the poor and misfortunate, orphans and widows and especially for the Holy Church that it may grow and spread and that Orthodoxy shine to the end of time. And to Procopius there was a reply from heaven that his prayers were heard after which he joyfully laid his head under the sword and went to his Lord in eternal joy. St. Procopius honorably suffered in Caesarea in Palestine and was crowned with the glorious wreath of immortality on July 8, 303 A.D.

## 2. SAINT PROCOPIUS, FOOL FOR CHRIST

Procopius was a miracle-worker of Ustiug who died in the year 1303 A.D. Procopius was of Varangian (Norse) descent and a merchant by profession. Coming to Novgorod on business, he was awed by the beauty of Orthodoxy and embraced the Orthodox Faith. Desiring to be a perfect Christian he distributed his estate to the poor and began to practice all the other virtues. He pretended insanity so that men would not praise him and discerned the hearts and destinies of men as well as natural events which, afterwards, indeed occurred. By his tearful prayer before the icon of the Birth-giver of God, Procopius averted a terrible hailstorm over the town of Ustiug and thus brought the sinful town to repentance. His body was found dead on the street completely covered with snow. A church was built over his miracle-working relics.

## 3. VENERABLE THEOPHILUS THE MYRRH-EMITTING [MIROTOCIVI]

Theophilus was born in Macedonia in the village of Ziki. He was a very educated man and a great ascetic. By order of Patriarch Niphon of Constantinople, he traveled to Alexandria to inquire whether it is true or not that Patriarch Joachim moved a mountain and that he drank poison without harmful effects being forced to do this by the Jews and Muslims. Convinced of the truthfulness of these miracles, Theophilus returned to Holy Mt. Athos where he lived a life of asceticism, at first in Vatopedi, then in Iveron and finally in the cell of St. Basil near Karyes. They offered the Archbishopric of Thessalonica to this holy man, but he refused. Through profound silence and meditation he succeeded to purify his mind of all passionate thoughts and became a pure vessel of the Holy Spirit in which Christ dwelled. Before his death, he ordered Isaac his disciple not to bury him when he dies but to tie a rope around his legs, drag him and then toss him into the river. With great fear, the disciple carried this out. However, the Divine Providence of God revealed the remains of St. Theophilus and when they translated his body to his cell, it began to emit miraculous myrrh. He entered into rest on July 8, 1548.

### HYMN OF PRAISE SAINT PROCOPIUS

When it is the will of the Omniscient God,  
Persecutors become His servants,  
Haters, wonderful apostles  
Pagans, zealots for the Faith.  
By God's will, Saul became Paul  
Nenias Saint Procopius  
Procopius, against Christ went,

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As a Christian, to his mother came.  
Tortures prepare and himself received tortures,  
All of a sudden, the truth he recognized  
Before the Son of God, bowed down,  
The earthly king, ceased to serve  
To the heavenly King, a servant became.  
The King of Heaven to him a gift bestowed  
The gift of might, the afflicted to help  
As at that time, so it is today:  
By Procopius, the afflicted are comforted  
For today as one time, he helps.

#### REFLECTION

St. Anthony teaches: "Be fearful that you do not become famous because of some work that you do. If they begin to praise you because of your work, do not rejoice in that and do not find satisfaction in that but keep your works in secret as much as you can and do not allow anyone to speak about them." How much more peace and joy would there be among men on earth if a part of mankind would take these holy words to heart! Even though St. Theophilus lived as a simple monk secluded on Holy Mt. Athos, he was famous in all the patriarchates of the east, as much for his learning as for his good works and ascetical life of mortification. It happened at one time that Theoleptus, the Patriarch of Constantinople, visited Thessalonica. At that time, the arch-episcopal throne of Thessalonica was vacant. The Christians of Thessalonica unanimously implored the patriarch to appoint Theophilus as their archbishop. The patriarch, a compatriot and friend of Theophilus, wrote a personal letter to him in which he invited him to accept the arch-episcopal throne. Fearing the glory of men and not being able to refuse the patriarch, Theophilus immediately received the "great angelic habit" [The Great Schema] and informed the patriarch of this adding: "If God be willing, we will see each other in the Kingdom of Heaven." Such were the spiritual giants, whom the Church calls saints, afraid of vanity and the glory of mankind.

#### CONTEMPLATION

To contemplate the miraculous changing of bitter water into sweet water (Exodus 15):

1. How the thirsty Israelites in Marah came upon bitter water and were unable to drink it and the people began to murmur against Moses;
2. How God commanded Moses to place wood in the water and the water became sweet;
3. How this wood foreshadowed the Cross of Christ by which the bitterness of our life is transformed into sweetness;
4. How my entire being is but bitter water until I bring Christ Crucified into myself.

#### HOMILY

About the Living Stone

"To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men but chosen of God and precious, You also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable by Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 2: 4-5).

Brethren, what does this stone signify if not stability? Brethren, what does the stone teach us, if not stability? The living stone signifies immortality. The apostle calls Christ the Lord the Living Stone

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because He is immortal and the giver of immortality. The apostle even calls Christians living stones as partakers of the immortality of Christ.

Brethren, what do unbelievers think concerning what happens to man at the end of time? They think that, in the end, the same thing happens to man as to a stone: man dies, becomes senseless and is transformed into dust. But a stone is already dead, senseless and, under certain conditions, is transformed into dust. So, both the unbelievers and the believers compare man with a stone; the unbelievers because of the deadness and the senselessness of the stone and the believers because of the durability and the stability of the stone. For the first [unbelievers], the stone is the symbol of death and for the other[unbelievers], the stone is the symbol of immortality.

In truth, without Christ, mankind has been and is always as a dead stone. But Christ is like a living stone. Adhere to Him only and you will become as living stones. In building a home, the builder chooses only those stones, which are chiseled out and prepared to easily lay along side the other stones in the wall. The builder rejects the unchiseled, the unprepared, the unpolished and the fragile stones. Building a home, or a temple of His Immortal Kingdom, Christ chooses men as the builder chooses stones, with one characteristic, namely alive, spiritually alive. The Lord rejects spiritually dead men as a rotten building and accepts only those who are alive, who resemble Him and who fall in place along side other living stones and they [the other living stones] are angels, prophets, apostles and saints in general. Brethren, let us endeavor to be a holy material for a holy house of the Kingdom of Christ which He builds day and night that He, by the end of time, finishes it completely.

O Lord Jesus, the builder of the Kingdom of Heaven, enliven us with Your Holy Spirit and build us also as living stones in the home of Your eternal glory.

To You be glory and thanks always. 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

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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.

**CONFESSIONS**

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

By appointment

Before Sunday Divine Liturgy (during Matins)

**VESPERS**

Saturday – 5:00 P.M.

**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**

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# MIND THE SPIRITUAL GAP!

WHEN DID YOU LAST  
INITIATE THE HOLY MYSTERY  
OF REPENTANCE?

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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”**