



Weekly Bulletin

Orthodox Church of the Annunciation

The Expulsion of Adam and Eve from the Paradise of Bliss

Troparion of the Resurrec- tion, Tone 8

Thou didst descend from on high, O Merciful One. Thou didst accept the three-day burial to free us from our sufferings. O Lord, our Life and Resurrection: Glory to Thee!

Troparion of Annunciation, Tone 4

Today is the beginning of our salvation, the revelation of the eternal mystery! the Son of God becomes the Son of the Virgin as Gabriel announces the coming of Grace. Together with him let us cry to the Theotokos: Rejoice, O Full of Grace, the Lord is with you.

Kontakion of the Expulsion Tone 6

O Master, Teacher of Wisdom, Bestower of virtue, who teaches the thoughtless and protects the poor: strengthen and enlighten my heart. O Word of the Father, let me not restrain my mouth from crying to Thee: have mercy on me, a transgressor, O Merciful Lord.

The 4th Pre-Lenten Sunday, Tone 8, March 17th, Matt. 6:14-21

On this Sunday the Holy Church focuses on the memory of the exile of our ancestral parents from paradise for disobedience and intemperance in order that through misfortune it more evidently emphasizes the importance of the presented ascetical effort for all, and in the loss of the blessedness of paradise it specifies a subject, worthy of repentance and tears.

The example of the ancestral parents shows us the whole weight of sin and its fatal consequences and teaches us to avoid intemperance as the beginning and the source of sin, and to turn to repentance, as to the unique means of deliverance from the anger and judgment of God.

"Adam was cast out", sings the Holy Church on this day, "from the sweetness of paradise, when with bitter desire he broke the commandment of the Master, and he was condemned to work the earth from which he himself had been taken, and then to eat his bread with much toil; therefore let us love abstinence, that we may not weep outside of paradise as he did, but enter into it"

"Let us keep the fast offering tears, contrition and alms",

"Let us still the passions of our soul, let us subdue the rebelliousness of the flesh";

"Girding ourselves for the good spiritual struggle of the fast" and "Taking up the armor of the cross, let us fight the enemy, having faith as an invincible wall, and prayer as a breastplate, and alms as a helmet, and fasting as a sword, which cuts away all evil from our heart";

With this tender, touching voice the Holy Church calls us as her children from the present day to forget everything that up to now occupied our thoughts and feelings and distracted them from "the one thing needful"; to reject everything from itself that serviced temptation and occasion for sin, that raised in us impure thoughts and feelings, that originated in us sinful desires and currents; to postpone for a while even our ordinary affairs and occupations, in so far as they soon distract our thoughts from a reverent deepening in our very selves, they irritate our heart with feelings of anger and envy, dreams of ambition and covetousness; to make itself thirsty for long prayerful vigils, fervent prayers and prostrations; to ignite in oneself an unshakable desire, voluntarily and vigilantly, thanking and glorifying the Lord to now enter the opening door of the saving fast, repentance and spiritual renewal; to kindle in itself a firm determination to pass the holy days of the fast fervently, reverently and joyfully. In the gospel and epistle readings, the Holy Church presents its final teachings about the spiritual efforts of the actual fast.

The Fast should begin with the forgiveness by the people of their trespasses and their rejection of the deeds of darkness consisting of an unfeigned fulfillment of the rules of keeping the fast and not to judge their neighbor. Reconciliation with all, the pardon and

Announcements and Activities

The Great Canon of St. Andrew of Crete— Monday, Tuesday and Thursday, at 7 PM.

Presanctified Liturgy— Wednesday, at 6PM. Those desiring to receive Holy Communion should say Pre-communion prayers and fast from food and drink from at least the time following their lunchtime meal.

Great Vespers— Saturday, at 5:30PM.

Divine Liturgy— Sunday, at 10AM.

Vigil for Annunciation— next Sunday, at 6PM and the **Vesperal Liturgy for Annunciation**, at 5PM on Monday, the 25th, with banquet to follow..

Coffee Hour— This week's Coffee Hour is being sponsored by Brandon and Leanna and Alexandra M. Next week's Coffee Hour will be our Bagels and Coffee week. From now until PASCHA, on May 5th. No meat, eggs or dairy may be served at Coffee Hours. Keep in mind that that includes by-products: no MILK chocolate, no sour CREAM, no regular Mayonnaise, etc. There are, of course, vegan substitutes for many of these items, and these are fine. Fish (with a backbone) is permitted twice in Lent: on March 25th, our feast day, and on Palm Sunday (April 28th). Shrimp, clams and other shellfish are permitted to be served, but should be prepared in a vegan manner.

Church School/Adult Ed— March 24th, at 9AM.

Lent— my beloved flock, I wish for all of you a most-blessed Lent. The greater the effort, the greater the incomparable fruit that arises in our spiritual understanding. Of course I am always available to talk with you about this season of prayer and fasting: to discuss limitations arising from medical concerns, etc. EVERYONE including me, your priest, should schedule a confession during Lent. Father is available before and after Vespers on most Saturdays and during the weekdays by appointment. A GOOD 40 DAYS, is a typical greeting before Lent begins. I wish you this and all that God has to give.

Parish Council— Today, met last Sunday. Though depleted through illness we got through our agenda, with eyes wide open to the planning for our consecration and our feast day.

remission of all our transgressions, is the first, main and necessary condition of our reconciliation with God, cleansing and correcting our sins. Without this reconciliation with all, without this putting an end to mutual conflicts and enmity among us, it is impossible to draw near to the Lord. It is impossible even to begin the holy journey to Lent and repentance.

From here came a custom of Orthodox Christians to ask each other forgiveness, and is the same as when they go to the graves of the dead for this purpose and is why the day is called in popular speech forgiveness and farewell 1). It is self understood, that not only with our mouth, but also mainly with our heart we should utter a full, complete forgiveness not only for something which insults us, but also for all that is hateful and offends us, all that condemns and curses us, all that makes every evil for us. We should try to bow with true - Christian humility for reconciliation and for which the devil, according to his evil and slander, had the misfortune to offend us in word and deed. Saint John Chrysostom teaches: "We should not forgive one another only by words, but with a pure heart so that our memory of the evil will not turn the sword against us. Our having been offended will not cause us evil as much as we cause ourselves, feeding the anger in ourselves and exposing ourselves to condemnation by God for that. If we love those who offend us, then evil will be turned on its very head, and it will continue to suffer severely; but if we will be indignant, then we shall continue to suffer all the same even in spite of ourselves".

Taken from the *Year of Grace of the Lord*, by A Monk of the Eastern Church

From the Lives of the Saints... SAINT ALEXIS THE MAN OF GOD

Varied are the paths upon which God leads those who desire to please Him and fulfill His Law. There lived in Rome at the time of Emperor Honorius a high-ranking dignitary, Euphemianus, who was highly respected and extremely wealthy. He and his wife, Aglaida, led a God-pleasing life. Even though he was wealthy, Euphemianus sat at the table once a day, after the setting of the sun. He had an only son, Alexis, who was compelled to marry when he became an adult. But, on the night of the wedding, Alexis left not only his wife but also the home of his father. He boarded a boat and arrived at the city of Edessa in Mesopotamia, where there was the wondrous image of our Lord, sent there by our Lord Himself to King Abgar. Having venerated this image, Alexis clothed himself in the garb of a beggar. As such, he lived in the city for seventeen years, continually praying to God in the vestibule of the Church of the Theotokos. When it became known that he was a holy man, he became frightened of the praise of men, departed Edessa, boarded a boat, and traveled to Laodicea. According to God's providence, the boat was carried off-course and sailed all the way to Rome. Considering this to be the hand of God, Alexis decided to go to the house of his father and there, unknown, continue his life of self-denial. His father did not recognize him but out of charity allowed him to live in his courtyard in a hut. Alexis remained there for seventeen years, living only on bread and water. Mistreated by the servants in various ways, he endured everything to the end. When his end approached, he wrote a letter, clenched it in his hand, and then lay down and died, on March 17, 411 A.D. At the same time there was a revelation in the Church of the Twelve Apostles. In the presence of the emperor and the patriarch a voice was heard which said: "Seek out the Man of God." Shortly after that, it was revealed that this "Man of God" resided at the house of Euphemianus. The emperor along with the pope and an entire retinue arrived at the home of Euphemianus, and after a lengthy discussion they learned that the beggar was that "Man of God." When they entered his hut, they found Alexis dead, but his face shown like the sun. From the letter his parents learned that he was their son Alexis. And his bride, who for thirty-four years had lived without him, learned that he was her husband. All were overcome with immense grief and pain. Later they were comforted, seeing how God glorified His chosen one. By touching his body, many of the sick were healed, and from his body flowed a sweet-smelling oil [Chrism]. His body was entombed in a coffin of marble and jasper. His head is preserved in the Church of St. Laurus in the Peloponnese.

Taken from the Prologue of Ochrid, Compiled and written by St. Nikolai Velimirovic

"There do not exist many or few, nor small or great problems. The only problem is the absence of Christ from our lives" (From the life and teachings of Elder Epiphanius Theodoropoulos)