



The Voice in the Wilderness

“A voice crying in the wilderness: Prepare ye the way of the LORD...”

Matthew 3:3

VOLUME 11 ISSUE 3

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SPECIAL SERVICES

- November 4 Vespers Liturgys for St Raphael 7pm
- November 16 Nativity Paracletis 7pm
- November 20 Great vespers for Entrance of the Theotokos 7 pm
- November 21 Feast of the Entrance of the Theotokos Orthros 8am Liturgy 10am
- November 23 Nativity Paracletis 7pm

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The Parish Newsletter of St. John the Forerunner Antiochian Orthodox Christian Church, a local parish of the Diocese of Wichita and Mid-America and the Self-Ruled Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America.



The Three Young Men in the Fiery Furnace, is celebrated during the Nativity Fast as a reminder of the grace acquired through fasting (15th century icon of the Novgorod school). Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, refusing to worship the golden idol erected by King Nebuchadnezzar, were cast into the furnace. An angel appeared to comfort them. The king, shown seated on his throne with the idol on the column behind him, marveled that the young men were not harmed by the flames and released them.

From the Pastor's Desk

Brothers and Sisters,
Greetings in the Name of the Lord.

One of the things that folks often mention when they're making their confession is inattention during the divine services. So, I thought I would use this month's column to talk about that important subject.

If we want to be focused during the services, one thing we can do is prepare adequately. And even if we can't do all the prayers that the Church encourages us to do leading up to the Divine Liturgy, we can at least avoid over-stimulation from media. For example, if we stay up late Saturday night to watch an exciting movie and then read the paper or check out our favorite web-sites before we leave for Church—and then listen to music or text our friends right up to the very moment that we get out of the car and walk into the nave, then we'll probably spend most of the Liturgy processing all those experiences and all that information instead of attending to what the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are trying to say to us.

Another thing we can do is spend more time in the Divine Services. In fact, one of the main reasons why our services are so long is because the Church understands that it takes most of us a good while just to relax and calm down before we can ever get around to actually praying. A good rule of thumb that works for most people is one hour in the Divine Services equals about two minutes of genuine interaction with the Most Holy Trinity. Of course, that two minutes can be life-changing and world-changing. However, if we never actually spend a full hour in the Divine Services, then we'll never experience that two minutes of authentic prayer. So, the more time we invest in the services, the more focused we will be.

But what if you have an infant or a small child, and you're constantly in and out during the Divine Liturgy? What if you are an usher or a chanter or you sing in the choir? Does that mean that you're never going to be able to really communicate with the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit? Of course not, because there is a special grace that accompa-

nies each of those roles. Folks who are raising young children or helping with the service are performing important tasks, and the Most Holy Trinity is going to make sure that they get what they need while they are doing their jobs. But we're not going to receive any special grace if we just wander in and out of the nave because we're bored or because we don't like to be still.

Still another thing we can do to stay focused during the services is to be honest about who we are. For example, if we are concerned about our health or stressed about our job or anxious about a family situation, it's not going to do any good at all to pretend like we're not thinking about those issues. But rather than just obsess over those things, we should turn them into prayers. And there are lots of ways to do that: we can light a candle for each of those problems when we first go into the nave; we can make the sign of the cross or make a metania every time one of those subjects pops up in our mind; we can touch the priest's vestments during the Great Entrance and attach all those topics to his intercessions; we can raise all of those issues up to the Most Holy Trinity when the deacon elevates the Holy Gifts over the altar. It may take quite a while and a lot of effort, but, eventually, we will clear all that stuff out of our hearts, and then we will be able to hear what the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are saying to us.

Worship is hard work—there's no doubt about it. But it is the most important work that we do all week long, because it's how we are getting closer to the Most Holy Trinity, it's how the people we love are going to get closer to the Most Holy Trinity, and it's how this world is being transformed through the love of the Most Holy Trinity. And the more attentive we are during that work, the more those incredibly important goals will be realized.

your unworthy priest
Aidan +



The Nativity Fast (November 15 to December 24)

The Nativity Fast is a period of abstinence and penance practiced by the Eastern Orthodox, Oriental Orthodox, and Eastern Catholic Churches, in preparation for the Nativity of Christ, (December 25).[1] The fast is similar to the Western Advent, except that it runs for 40 days instead of four weeks. The fast is observed from November 15 to December 24, inclusively.

Sometimes the fast is called Philip's Fast (or the Philippian Fast), as it traditionally begins on the day following the Feast of St. Philip the Apostle (November 14). Some churches have abbreviated the fast to start on December 10, following the Feast of the Conception by Saint Anne of the Most Holy Theotokos.

The purpose of Fasting

Fasting with humility and repentance is believed to enable one to draw closer to God by denying the body worldly pleasure. Although the fast influences the body, the emphasis is placed on the spiritual facet of the fast rather than physical deprivation. Orthodox theology sees a synthesis between the body and the soul, so what happens to one affects the other. The church teaches that it is not enough to fast from food; one must also fast from anger, greed and covetousness. In addition to fasting, almsgiving is also emphasized.[Archimandrite Kallistos (Ware), "The True Nature of Fasting", The Lenten Triodion, 1978]

Fasting Rules

In the Eastern Orthodox Church, the fast traditionally entails fasting from red meat, poultry, meat products, eggs, dairy products, fish, oil, and wine. Fish, wine and oil are allowed on Saturdays and Sundays, and oil and wine are allowed on Tuesdays and Thursdays. The fasting rules permit fish, and/or wine and oil on certain feast days that occur during the course of the fast: Evangelist Matthew (November 16), Apostle Andrew (November 30), Great-martyr Barbara (December 4), St. Nicholas (December 6), St. Spiridon and St. Herman (December 12), St. Ignatius (December 20), etc. The Nativity Fast is not as severe as Great Lent or the Dormition Fast. From December 20 through December 24 fish is not allowed, however, shellfish may be consumed.

As is always the case with Orthodox fasting rules, persons who are ill, the very young or elderly, and nursing mothers are exempt from fasting. Each individual is expected to confer with their confessor regarding any exemptions from the fasting rules, but should never place themselves in physical danger. The Eve of Nativity (December 24) is a strict fast day, called Paramony (lit. "preparation"), on which no solid food should be eaten until the first star is seen in the evening sky (or at the very least, until after the Vespers Divine Liturgy that day). If Paramony falls on a Saturday or Sunday, the day is not ob-

served as a strict fast, but a meal with wine and oil is allowed after the Divine Liturgy, which would be celebrated in the morning.

Prayer

During the Nativity Fast, Orthodox Christians are expected to pay closer attention to their private prayers and to say more of them more often. The Fathers have referred to fasting without prayer as "the fast of the demons" since the demons do not eat according to their incorporeal nature, but neither do they pray. Most Orthodox Christians make extra effort to attend all or some of the special Nativity Paraclesis services that are held during the Nativity Lent. They will make a special effort to read the scriptures, have family and personal prayer around the icon corner. Some families will use the Advent Wreath Services written by Father Conaris has a service published as part of his book, "[Making God Real in the Orthodox Christian Home](#) available from Light and Life Books.

Alms Giving

In Christ's teaching, alms-giving goes together with fasting and prayer. During Nativity Lent Orthodox Christians are called to fasting, prayer, and almsgiving. As with fasting and prayer during Nativity Lent, the gifts of help to the poor must be done strictly in secret, so much so that one should, as it were, even hide from himself what he is giving to others, not

letting one hand know what the other is doing. Every effort must be made, if the gift will be pleasing to God, to avoid all ostentation and boastfulness in its giving. Orthodox Christians believe that there is no real love if one does not share what he has with the poor.

According to St. John Chrysostom, no one can be saved without giving alms and without caring for the poor. St. Basil the Great says that a man who has two coats or two pair of shoes, when his neighbor has none, is a thief. All earthly things are the possessions of God. "The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof, the world and those who dwell in it." (Psalm 24:1) Men are but stewards of what belongs to the Lord and should share the gifts of His creation with one another as much as they can. To store up earthly possessions, according to Christ, is the epitome of foolishness, and a rich man shall hardly be saved. (cf. Luke 12:15-21)

During the Nativity Lent, Orthodox Christians are called to fast, pray, and give alms that we may be ready for the coming advent of Christ our God.



St John Chrysostom on Fasting

Fasting is the change of every part of our life, because the sacrifice of the fast is not the abstinence but the distancing from sins. Therefore, whoever limits the fast to the deprivation of food, he is the one who, in reality, abhors and ridicules the fast. Are you fasting? Show me your fast with your works. Which works? If you see someone who is poor, show him mercy. If you see an enemy, reconcile with him. If you see a friend who is becoming successful, do not be jealous of him! If you see a beautiful woman on the street, pass her by.

In other words, not only should the mouth fast, but the eyes and the legs and the arms and all the other parts of the body should fast as well. Let the hands fast, remaining clean from stealing and greediness. Let the legs fast, avoiding roads which lead to sinful sights. Let the eyes fast by not fixing themselves on beautiful faces and by not observing the beauty of others. You are not eating meat, are you? You should not eat debauchery with your eyes as well. Let your hearing also fast. The fast of hearing is not to accept bad talk against others and sly defamations...

If you cannot go without eating all day because of an ailment of the body, beloved one, no logical man will be able to criticize you for that...For there exist, there really exist, ways which are even more important than abstinence from food which can open the gates which lead to God with boldness. He, therefore, who eats and cannot fast, let him display richer almsgiving, let him pray more, let him have a more intense desire to hear divine words. In this, our somatic illness is not a hindrance. Let him become reconciled with his enemies, let him distance from his soul every resentment. If he wants to accomplish these things, then he has done the true fast, which is what the Lord asks of us more than anything else.

Prayer for Nativity Lent



O our Lord Jesus Messiah, the Son of God who was born of Woman and had bruised the head of the evil Serpent, and was seen as the son of Abraham on the earth and had opened the doors of mercy for all generations of the world!

Accept this lent fast that we observe to the glory of the feast of Thy Nativity like the offerings of the kings from the East. Together with the angels who adored Thee at Bethlehem on the day of Thy Condescension and with the humble shepherds who bowed down before Thee in their simplicity, make us worthy to offer worship to Thy Worthiness on the holy Christmas day.

By Thy enlightening light of Truth, on this ephemeral era of Thy first advent in meekness, help us to live a life adorned with the garments of light leaving aside all forces of darkness. Thus, O our Lord and God! May we be risen up for eternal life on Thy glorious second coming and along with Thy Holy Mother and all saints and angels to raise praises to the majesty of the Holy Trinity! Amen.

All Saints Club



Fall Session Dates:

Oct. 23 Oct. 30

Nov. 6 Nov. 13

St. Nicholas Celebration Dec. 4th



Catechesis of the Good Shepherd



Catechesis of the Good Shepherd is a religious education program for children ages 3-12. Because it is attuned to the developmental and spiritual needs of children, the Catechesis experience is both religious education and spiritual formation. Our focus is on helping each child strengthen his or her personal prayer life, participation in corporate worship, and growing knowledge of the Bible and of God's unfolding salvific work throughout history. This holistic approach to Orthodox catechesis is enriching both our children and the volunteers who serve them, fostering a culture of continual spiritual growth.

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We are working to adopt an Orthodox version of Catechesis of the Good Shepherd (CGS) for All Saints Club at St. John. This beautiful program requires extensive training for all Catechists (teachers) and the creation of a spiritually-nurturing Atrium (classroom) for each age group. Please take time to learn more about CGS at:

http://www.stathanasius.org/site/content/what_is_cgs

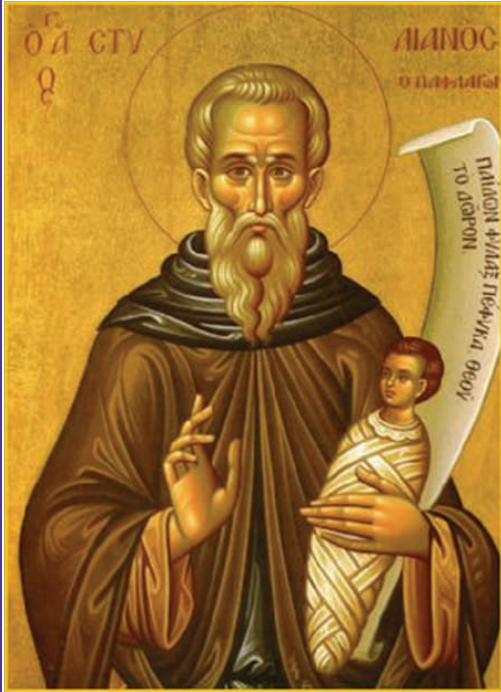
DREAM with us

PRAY with us

BUILD with us!

Saints to Live By:

Saint Stylianus November 26



Saint Stylianus was born in Paphlagonia of Asia Minor sometime between the fourth and sixth centuries. He inherited a great fortune from his parents when they died, but he did not keep it. He gave it away to the poor according to their need, desiring to help those who were less fortunate. He left the city and went to a monastery, where he devoted his life to God. Since he was more zealous and devout than the other monks, he

provoked their jealousy and had to leave. He left the monastery to live alone in a cave in the wilderness, where he spent his time in prayer and fasting.

The goodness and piety of the saint soon became evident to the inhabitants of Paphlagonia, and they sought him out to hear his teaching, or to be cured by him. Many were healed of physical and mental illnesses by his prayers.

St Stylianus was known for his love of children, and he would heal them of their infirmities. Even after his death, the citizens of Paphlagonia believed that he could cure their children. Whenever a child became sick, an icon of St Stylianus was painted and was hung over the child's bed.

At the hour of his death, the face of St Stylianus suddenly became radiant, and an angel appeared to receive his soul.

Known as a protector of children, St Stylianus is depicted in iconography holding an infant in his arms. Pious Christians ask him to help and protect their children, and childless women entreat his intercession so that they might have children.

Saint Apphia November 22

The Holy Apostles of the Seventy Philemon and his wife Apphia lived in the city of Colossa in Phrygia. After they were baptized by St. Paul, they converted their home into a house of prayer, where all those who believed in Christ gathered and attended services. They devoted themselves to serving the sick and down-cast.



St. Philemon became bishop of the city of Gaza and preached the Word of God throughout Phrygia. St. Paul continued to be his guide, and addressed to him his Epistle filled with love, and in which he sends blessings "to Philemon our dearly beloved, and fellow laborer, and to our beloved Apphia, and to Archippus our fellow soldier, and to the church in thy house" (Phil 1:1-3).

Sts. Philemon and Apphia received the crown of martyrdom during the persecutions by Emperor Nero (54-68). During a pagan festival, an enraged crowd rushed into a Christian church while services were taking place. All fled in terror, with only Philemon, Archippus and Apphia remaining. They were seized and led off to the city prefect. The crowd beat and stabbed St. Archippus with knives, and he died on the way to court. Sts. Philemon and Apphia were stoned to death by order of the prefect.

“O Give Thanks Unto The Lord...”

As a word, the term eucharist means thanksgiving. This name is given to the sacred meal not only to the elements of bread and wine, but to the whole act of gathering, praying, reading the Holy Scriptures and proclaiming

God's Word, remembering Christ and eating and drinking his Body and Blood in communion with him and with God the Father, by the Holy Spirit. The word eucharist is used because the all-embracing meaning of the Lord's Banquet is that of thanksgiving to God in Christ and the Holy Spirit for all that he has done in making, saving and glorifying the world. (Father Thomas Hopko, *The Orthodox Faith : The Sacraments*)

Following the reception of Communion, all Orthodox Christians should offer the prayers of thanksgiving after communion. In some parishes like St John the Forerunner those prayers are said by the congregation immediately after the dismissal for the Divine Liturgy. In other parishes you may have to individually offer the Thanksgiving prayers after communion. You may find those prayers in most Orthodox prayer books or make a copy online from the following website: <http://stjohndfw.info/prayers-after-communion.html>

A pious tradition for many Orthodox Christians is the praying in the home of the Akathist of Thanksgiving in offering of thanks for the many blessings that God has done for them. You may find this online at <http://peterandpaul.net/svc-akathist-thanksgiving>

There is nothing more vital, more crucial, and more essential than the simple act of giving

thanks. What else can we give to our Creator and Maker? He has no need for our praise, our great deeds, our creations... He has need of nothing, yet He created this lovely world with its infinite possibilities for our sake,

and for our salvation. Do we remember to give thanks, if not moment by moment, then day by day? Have we ceased to bear in mind the great gift of our own life, and the lives of those around us? Satan would have this „stealing of our memory,“ which leads to a life of discontent, restlessness, and disgruntlement, but clearly God is not the author of this erroneous way of being. What can we give our Lord in thanksgiving for all He has given to us? Here is a little list of reminders to keep us on the straight and narrow of a Eucharistic (thanksgiving centered) life.



1. Look for goodness wherever you can find it.

2. Look for the strengths and talents in those around you.
3. Affirm, often, those strengths and talents in others.
4. Be cheerful and a light in a dark world.
5. Forgive others and yourself quickly.
6. Repent of your sins with your whole heart.
7. Give of your time with ardor and devotion.
8. Greet each person you interact with daily demonstrating your affection and love for them.
9. Remember the gospel is, for us, a way of life.

“O GIVE thanks unto the LORD; for he is good: for his mercy endureth for ever.”

Psalm 107:1

Do Others Give Thanks for Us?

By V Rev Father Dimitri Cosby

He will make you rich in all things so that you may be generous. Then through us others will have reason to give thanks to God (II Corinthians 9:11)

Each November we celebrate the civil holiday of Thanksgiving. While the commemoration has a secular origin, the idea of thankfulness which lies behind it is certainly a Christian concept. We readily acknowledge our need for giving thanks, particularly to God, our Creator and Redeemer. We may not always remember to be properly thankful; often we overlook or fail to appreciate fully what our God has done for us. Still, we all recognize, however imperfectly, that we should express our thanks for His blessings.

Saint Paul, however, presents us with another aspect of giving thanks. In the passage quoted above, he exhorts us to be the reason that people give thanks to God. Moreover, in his various letters, he mentions that he gives thanks for the addressees because they have been a source of blessing to him (Romans 1:8; I Corinthians 1:4; Ephesians 1:16; Philippians 1:3; Colossians 1:3; I Thessalonians 1:2; II Thessalonians 1:3; Philemon 4)

We should seriously consider the Apostle's point as we approach Thanksgiving. Do others give thanks to God because they know us? Have we been a channel through which God's blessings have flowed to others? If not, how can we acquire and grow in this virtue? Looking at the various places where the Apostle gives thanks for what others have done can help us see the challenge contained in these questions.

Our aid to others can take many forms, and the Apostle strives to define it broadly. We can benefit others in both material and spiritual ways. The section of II Corinthians from which the quotation above is taken demonstrates both. The Apostle has been speaking about a collection of money which he was gathering in the churches of Greece and Asia Minor for the benefit of the poverty-stricken Church of Jerusalem. Certainly, material philanthropy is an important aspect of the spiritual life. Our Lord Himself includes almsgiving with prayer and fasting as the essential disciplines of piety (Matthew 6).

Philanthropy can take many forms. The primary one is our stewardship to the Church through our local parish, diocese, and national Church, by which we support and promote her work of education, evangelization, and charity. However, we should not neglect gifts to service organizations like C.A.M., and even direct personal assistance to the needy whom we may know. We should not restrict this aid to donations of money; gifts in kind and the donation of our time and talents through volunteer work are equally valuable.

It is essential to remember that what God gives us, He intends us to share. Saint Paul affirms that God "will make you rich in all things so that you may be generous." This point is made in one of the prayers in the wedding service, which echoes the Apostle's words: "Fill their houses with wheat, wine and oil, and every good thing, so that they may give in turn to those in need." As Saint John Chrysostom notes, God bestows His bounty upon us "not that ye may consume it upon things not fitting, but upon such as bring much thanksgiving to God." The Lord has not blessed us for our own benefit, but so that we may reflect His generosity in the world.

Saint Paul clearly does not mean for us to restrict our philanthropy to material things. When he promises that our Lord will make us "rich in all things", he obviously does not have in mind physical wealth alone. We see this point illustrated in the "thanksgiving" which begin so many of his letters. Typical is the epistle to the Colossians: "We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you, because we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love which you have for all the saints..." (1:3-4) The two particular characteristics for which he gives thanks, their faith and love, recur from letter to letter.

(Continued on Page 9)

Do Others Give Thanks for Us?(Continued)



These two virtues undergird our Christian life. They stimulate and encourage us in our spiritual struggle. Both spring from our relationship with Christ in the Spirit. We commit ourselves in faith to His Gospel, and by His divine grace our Lord affirms, strengthens and reshapes that commitment, transfiguring it into communion in His holiness and peace. St. John exclaims, "We love, because He first loved us" (1 John 4:19). The most common epithet applied to our Lord in Orthodox worship is "He who loves mankind," in Greek, "philanthropos". The English word "philanthropy" comes from this same Greek expression and means literally "love for man". Our love for Him and for others is a reflection of His love for us, which led Him to enter this fallen world, to endure death, and to rise again for our salvation. As Saint John further attests, "In this is love, not that we loved God but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the expiation for our sins" (1 John 4:10).

As we are called to share our material blessings, so also must we share the Lord's spiritual bounty. Indeed, it is really easier for many of us to aid others in spiritual ways than in material ones. God does not choose to bestow earthly riches equally upon everyone. Those who are so blessed, as we have pointed out, He requires to share from their abundance, giving to those who are in need. Often, however, material things are not what people lack. Man's deepest needs are spiritual: to enjoy the love of our fellow creatures, to be assured of God's love, and to experience Christ's forgiveness and His new life of grace.

God blesses us spiritually as well as materially. Our life of faith and love, lived in Him, provide us with the courage, the moral strength, and the peace we need to face temptations and tribulations. He expects us to share these blessings with those less fortunate, just as surely as He expects us to share material goods. This spiritual philanthropy can be as simple as a kind word or a sympathetic ear in someone's time of need. It can be as life-changing as bringing them to the Church and communicating to the Orthodox Christian Faith. The form of our contribution must depend on the needs of those we are called to help. For ourselves, we must seek to be as generous spiritually as we are with material things.

As we approach Thanksgiving we should, of course, remember the things we have to be thankful for, both material and spiritual blessings. But we should also take moment to ask if we ourselves have been a blessing to others. Have we used our material bounty to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, or shelter the homeless? Have we equally shared our spiritual abundance, welcoming the spiritually homeless into the shelter of Christ's Church, clothing them in the splendor of her teaching, and nourishing them with the grace of her Mysteries. Have we pursued the spiritual life, asking forgiveness of those whom we have sinned against, making amends for the evil we have done, seeking to grow through the spiritual disciplines, pursuing the virtues in the grace of the Holy Spirit? Have we then sought to share the grace thus acquired with others?

Our reminds us that we are the salt of the earth. He calls us the light of the world, and then commands us, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven." (Matthew 5: 13-16) Have we truly been the salt which seasons the world with repentance and righteousness, effacing the bitterness of sin? Have we been the light which brightens our world, reflecting the light of Christ to those with whom we live and work? Have we been the sort of people that others around us are thankful to know and to have in their lives? This Thanksgiving, are there others who give thanks for us?

Courtesy of [The Dawn, Newspaper of the Diocese of the South Orthodox Church in America](#)

Observing Nativity Lent with Your Family

On November 15, the Nativity Fast – a period of preparation for the celebration of the Nativity of Our Lord – begins. Now is the time to start thinking about how to observe the season in the Church, school, and home. Instead of fretting over the “commercialization of Christmas and spending time shopping and working on the many diversions of Nativity, Families should join with your children’s teachers in stressing the impending celebration of birth of Our Lord and Savior.

Here are a few suggestions to help you observe Nativity Lent with your family:

- Instead of fretting over the “commercialization of Christmas,” emphasize with your children how holiday decorations remind us of the coming of Christ and the joy that will be experienced by receiving Him as God’s greatest gift to mankind.
- The lighting of Advent candles, the hanging of wreaths, and the sending of greeting cards to relatives and friends can be occasions for discussing the impending feast. Even the selection of gifts can be done in the context of discussing the gift God gives to His People through the birth of His Son, Jesus Christ, while the hanging of lights offers an occasion to reflect on Christ, the “Light of the world.”
- Organize groups of individuals and families to sing carols for home-bound parishioners or nursing home residents, offering the “gift of song” to those who surely would appreciate a visit. Distribute small gifts – perhaps essential person items like hand cream – as an expression of the gift of eternal life made possible through the incarnation of Christ.
- In addition to observing the season’s traditional fasting regulations, spend a few minutes before dinner reading the day’s appointed scripture readings as a family. During dinner, discuss the meaning of that which

was read.

- Practice almsgiving. Parents – set aside a “dollar a day” during the Nativity Fast for the needy. Encourage children to set aside a “dime a day” from their allowances. Place the alms in a box or can, and bring them to services on the Great Feast of the Nativity. Earmark them to be given to a needy person or family in the parish or to a community agency that offers assistance to the needy.

The feast day of St. Nicholas is celebrated on December 6. It is a wonderful opportunity to de-emphasize Santa Claus and bring alive St. Nicholas. Tell your child the wonderful story of this fourth century bishop of Myra (modern day Turkey) who possessed much love and generosity. Point out this is one reason we give gifts on Christmas day. It is why Russia chose this selfless bishop to be her patron saint.

Here are some other ways to celebrate St. Nicholas Day at home:

- As a family, you may want to exchange gifts on St. Nicholas Day instead of Christmas. You may decide to give only your child his/her gifts on this day, in keeping with the tradition. Or you might want to give your child just one gift on this day.
- Get an icon of St. Nicholas and display it during this time. Place it on a stand or hang it where your child can easily see it and pick it up if s/he wants to. It’s the best way they can get to know this humble and holy saint.

No matter how you choose to observe the Nativity fast, it is important that you do it as a family together by Fasting, Praying, and the Giving of Alms to the poor. When you do this your family will receive the blessings of the Nativity Fast.

The St. Nicholas Project 2011



This year we are entering our sixth annual Saint Nicholas project for the children of the All Saints Club . For those of you who do not know what the St Nicholas Project is read on!

From Sunday, November 20 thru Sunday December 4, the youth of St. John the Forerunner will be collecting food for the Hill Country Ministries Food bank and Toys for children in the area who may not be able to have a toy this Christmas. The children have

the opportunity to emulate the charity and generosity of St Nicholas towards those who were less fortunate by collecting new, unwrapped toys. Like St. Nicholas, they will be feeding the poor of our area by collecting canned goods for the Hill Country Ministry. A special Box for toys and Canned Goods will be in the foyer of the Church to place your donations. The Project ends on Sunday December 4, the Sunday before St Nicholas day. This is the day the All Saints Club will celebrate St Nicholas. The youth will present their offerings to Father Aidan for blessing and then they will be taken to local Charities for distribution. We hope you will join the youth in their honoring of St. Nicholas by helping them with new toys and extra canned goods, as well as, emulating St. Nicholas acts of random kindness to friends and strangers throughout the Nativity Lent.

A GREAT NATIVITY LENT RESOURCE FOR HOME

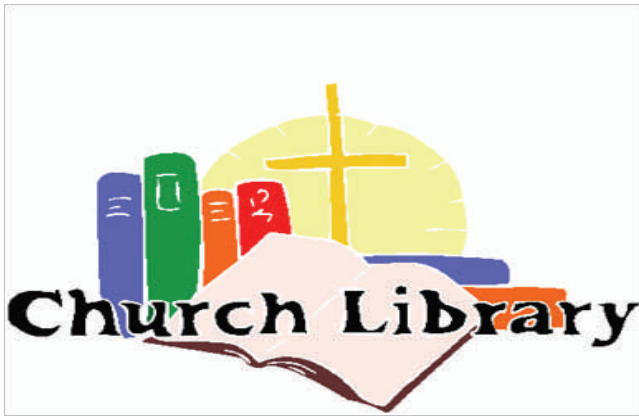
Feasts and Families: The Season of Christmas, offers a wealth of lessons and activities that can be used at home or in Church school to prepare for the celebration of the Nativity of Our Lord. The parent/teacher guide is accompanied by a volume with cut-outs, patterns, and other Nativity projects. The Season of Christmas covers the period between the start of the Nativity-Fast on November 15 through the end of Christmas cycle – February 2. A brief

explanation is given for each day or season. Related scripture readings are included, as are a variety of other resources for all ages.

Tips for using the text at home, in groups, and in class are included.

You can order this book through Christ the Light-giver Bookstore.

St John's



Here are some new books that have been generously donated to the Parish Lending Library. Hope you'll stop by and check them out!

1. Gregory of Nyssa - The Life of Moses
2. St. Chrysostom - First Series - The Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers
3. Akathist to the Mother of God, Nurturer of Children
4. The Living God, A Catechism for the Christian Faith, Vol. 1 & 2
5. Galatians - A Commentary
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12. Ikons: Meditations in Words and Music
13. Royal Monastic: Princess Ileana of Romania
14. Celtic Sacred Landscapes
15. Celtic Christian Spirituality - An Anthology of Medieval and Modern Sources
16. Celtic Spirituality
17. The Celtic Saints

Daily Devotions
NOVEMBER 2011
V. Rev. George Alberts

1. 1 CORINTHIANS 12:27-13:8 MATTHEW 10:1, 5-8
2. COLOSSIANS 1:18-23; LUKE 11:42-46 (FAST)
3. COLOSSIANS 1:24-29; LUKE 11:47-12:1
4. COLOSSIANS 2:1-7; LUKE 12:2-12 (FAST)
5. 2 CORINTHIANS 3:12-18; LUKE 9:1-6
6. TITUS 3:8-15; LUKE 8:41-56
7. COLOSSIANS 2:13-20; LUKE 12:13-15, 22-31
8. HEBREWS 2:2-10; LUKE 10:16-21
9. COLOSSIANS 3:17-4:1; LUKE 12:48-59 (FAST)
10. COLOSSIANS 4:2-9; LUKE 13:1-9
11. COLOSSIANS 4:10-18; LUKE 13:31-35 (FAST)
12. 2 CORINTHIANS 5:1-10; LUKE 9:37-43
13. HEBREWS 7:26-8:2; LUKE 10:25-37
14. 1 THESSALONIANS 1:1-5; LUKE 14:12-15
15. 1 THESSALONIANS 1:6-10; LUKE 14:25-35 (FAST)
16. 1 CORINTHIANS 4:9-16; MATTHEW 9:9-13 (FAST)
17. 1 THESSALONIANS 2:9-14; LUKE 16:1-9 (FAST)
18. 1 THESSALONIANS 2:14-19; LUKE 16:15-18; 17:1-4 (FAST)
19. 2 CORINTHIANS 8:1-5; LUKE 9:57-62 (FAST)
20. EPHESIANS 2:4-10; LUKE 12:16-21 (FAST)
21. MEETING OF THE THEOTOKOS IN THE TEMPLE
HEBREWS 9:1-7; LUKE 10:38-42, 12:27-28 (FAST)
22. 1 THESSALONIANS 3:9-13; LUKE 17:26-37 (FAST)
23. 1 THESSALONIANS 4:1-12; LUKE 18:15-17, 26-30 (FAST)
24. EPHESIANS 6:10-17; LUKE 21:12-19 (FAST)
25. 1 THESSALONIANS 5:9-13, 24-28 (FAST)
26. 2 CORINTHIANS 11:1-6; LUKE 10:19-21 (FAST)
27. EPHESIANS 2:14-22; LUKE 18:18-27 (FAST)
28. 2 THESSALONIANS 1:1-10; LUKE 19:37-44 (FAST)
29. 2 THESSALONIANS 1:10-22; LUKE 19:45-48 (FAST)
30. 1 CORINTHIANS 4:9-16; JOHN 1:35-51 (FAST)

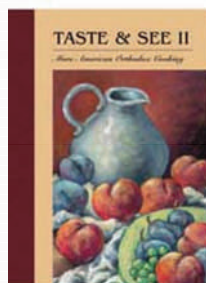
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Food for the Kingdom



In cooking during the Nativity Lent, it is important to remember the word **FAST**.

- 1) Your cooking should follow the basic rules of the **Fast**.
- 2) Your meal should be **Fast** and easy to prepare.
- 3) Allow **Fast** preparation with little attention needed as it cooks so you may take a prayer break, read a spiritual article, or meditate on Holy Scripture.

Vegetable soups, stews, and vegetarian chili are just samples of dishes that meet the fast rule. For breakfast don't forget hot cereals like instant oatmeal, cream of wheat or other wholesome grain cereals.

Here are some recipes to get you started **FAST!**

Sweet Potato-Peanut Bisque

This satisfying vegetarian soup is inspired by the flavors of West African peanut soup. We like the added zip of hot green chiles, but they can sometimes be very spicy. It's best to take a small bite first and add them to taste. Try chopped peanuts and scallions for a different garnish. Serve with a mixed green salad with vinaigrette.

Ingredients

- 2 (10-12 ounces each) large sweet potatoes
- 1 tablespoon(s) canola oil
- 1 small yellow onion, chopped
- 1 clove(s) (large) garlic, minced
- 3 cup(s) reduced-sodium tomato-vegetable juice blend or tomato juice
- 1 can(s) (4-ounce) diced green chiles, *(You

choose the spice mild, medium, hot), drained

- 2 teaspoon(s) minced fresh ginger
- 1 teaspoon(s) ground allspice
- 1 can(s) (15-ounce) vegetable broth
- 1/2 cup(s) smooth natural peanut butter
- Freshly ground pepper to taste
- Chopped fresh cilantro leaves for garnish

Directions

1. Prick sweet potatoes in several places with a fork. Microwave on High until just cooked through, 7 to 10 minutes. Set aside to cool.

2. Meanwhile, heat oil in a large saucepan or Dutch oven over medium-high heat. Add onion and cook, stirring, until it just begins to brown, 2 to 4 minutes. Add garlic and cook, stirring, for 1 minute more. Stir in juice, green chiles, ginger, and allspice. Adjust the heat so the mixture boils gently; cook for 10 minutes.

3. Meanwhile, peel the sweet potatoes and chop into bite-size pieces. Add half to the pot. Place the other half in a food processor or blender along with broth and peanut butter. Puree until completely smooth. Add the puree to the pot and stir well to combine. Thin the bisque with water, if desired. Season with pepper. Heat until hot. Garnish with cilantro, if desired.



Food for the Kingdom (continued)

Eggplant and Chickpea Stew (OIL)

This tasty vegetarian stew, studded with plenty of eggplant and protein-rich chickpeas, is reminiscent of ratatouille. The eggplant breaks down and makes a saucier stew if you peel it before cooking, but you can certainly leave the peel on if you prefer. Serve over quinoa or soft polenta with sautéed spinach on the side. This can be cooked in a crock pot as well. Leftovers? Combine the leftovers with pantry staples to make our easy Eggplant and Chickpea Baked Pasta.

Ingredients

- 1 ounce(s) dried porcini mushrooms
- 3 cup(s) hot water
- 2 large eggplants (about 1 1/2 pounds each)
- 3 tablespoon(s) extra-virgin olive oil, divided
- 2 large onions, thinly sliced
- 6 clove(s) garlic, minced
- 2 teaspoon(s) dried oregano, crumbled
- 1 small (1-inch) cinnamon stick
- 1 teaspoon(s) salt
- 1 teaspoon(s) freshly ground pepper
- 1 bay leaf
- 1 cup(s) dried chickpeas, rinsed and soaked overnight (for a quick-soak method, see Tip) and drained
- 1 can(s) (28-ounce) tomatoes (see Note), drained and coarsely chopped
- 1/4 cup(s) finely chopped fresh parsley

Directions

1. Preheat oven to 400 degrees F.
2. Combine dried mushrooms and hot water in a bowl. Stir well and let stand for 30 minutes. Strain through a sieve lined with a paper towel and set the liquid aside. Finely chop the mushrooms.
3. Meanwhile, peel eggplants, if desired, and cut in half lengthwise. Brush the cut sides liberally with 2 tablespoons oil. Place on a rimmed baking sheet, cut-side down, and roast until tender, about 25 minutes. Let stand until cool enough to handle. Cut into 1-inch cubes and transfer to a 4-quart (or larger) slow cooker.
4. Meanwhile, heat the remaining 1 tablespoon oil in a large skillet over medium heat. Add onions and cook, stirring frequently, until softened, 3 to 6 minutes. Add garlic, oregano, cinnamon stick, salt, pepper, bay leaf, and the chopped mushrooms; cook, stirring, for 1 minute. Add the reserved mushroom-soaking liquid and chickpeas. Bring to a boil and cook, stirring occasionally, for 5 minutes. Transfer to the slow cooker and stir to combine with the eggplant.
5. Cover and cook until the chickpeas are very tender, about 4 hours on High or 7 to 8 hours on Low. Remove



cinnamon stick and bay leaf. Stir in tomatoes and parsley.

Overnight Crock Pot Oatmeal

Cold winter mornings are the worst. Knowing that I have to crawl out of my nice warm bed into the cold air, stumble down the hallway and get the kiddos ready for school. . . Sometimes I just wish there were a nice, hot breakfast waiting for me in the kitchen. Well, with Overnight Crock Pot Oatmeal there is! With this recipe there will be plenty of oatmeal to feed 4-6 adults.

Ingredients:

- 1 cup steel cut or regular oats (NOT Quick Oats!)
- 4 cups water
- 1/2 cup soy milk or non-dairy creamer
- 1/4 cup brown sugar
- 1 TBS fasting margarine
- 1/2 tsp vanilla extract
- 1 tsp cinnamon

Directions:

Combine all in crockpot and cook on low for 8hrs (that is 10 pm if you need it ready by 6am)

Serve with soymilk or non-dairy creamer & cinnamon sugar.

Variations:

- Add up to 1 C raisins/dried fruit before cooking.
- Add 1 chopped fresh apple before cooking.
- Top with fresh fruit (in season) or canned fruit (drained).
- Add a pat of fasting margarine or a dollop of jam/preserves.
- Drizzle with honey.

Note: leftovers heat well in the microwave the next day.

St John's Community News

Special services:

November 4 Vespers Liturgys for St Raphael 7pm

November 16 Nativity Paraclesis 7pm

November 20 Great vespers for Entrance of the Theotokos 7 pm

November 21 Feast of the Entrance of the Theotokos Orthros 8am Liturgy 10am

November 23 Nativity Paraclesis 7pm

Community News:

November 12 : The Orthopraxis of Nativity Lent. In the Orthopraxis of Nativity Lent, we will be discussing the particular observance of Nativity Lent, sometimes called advent in the Orthodox Church. Handouts include instructions and services for an Orthodox Advent Wreath, a Family retreat, and other Nativity Lent Practices that will enrich your Nativity Lent observances.

November 13 Parish Council. Anyone wishing to attend the open parish council meeting are welcome to attend and see how decisions are made in the administering of St John the Forerunner Antiochian Orthodox Church.

Special Orthopraxis of Nativity Lent Activities Available by Asking Subdeacon Thomas for copy by e-mail or in person. The material for the Orthopraxis of Nativity Lent is available to any parishioner who wishes a copy. It includes information for a nativity Lent Wreath, family Activities, Nativity Lent Practices that will enrich your Nativity Lent observances. Please contact Subdeacon Thomas at soctgw@excite.com or at church for your copy.

AMERICAN THANKSGIVING DAY- On the Fourth Thursday of the month, November 24 the people of the United States gather in their families to thank the Lord for all that He has done for us, and for our world. The Holy Synod of Bishops of the Self-Ruling Archdiocese of The Antiochian Orthodox Church of North America has granted to Antiochian Orthodox Christians the oeconomia of eating a traditional Thanksgiving Feast including Turkey on this day despite it being in the Nativity Lenten fast period. Your non-fasting recipes that have leftovers will be need to be packaged and frozen awaiting the feast of the Nativity to finish enjoying them.

A Service Opportunity picnic tables on our property need to be refurbished! We are also going to be purchasing some new tables soon, so we can have more out door seating during Fellowship Hour. But, in the weeks ahead, if you can help sand and stain the tables that we currently own, please send Gregg Easley, our faithful facilities guy, an email at ekg3easley@att.net.

PARISH PRAYER LIST:

Pray for the health of body and soul of those who have requested your prayers:

Father Deacon Basil, Subdeacon Vladimir, Reader Matthew, Nun Elizabeth, Kh Angie, Missionaries Jeffrey and Caryn and their children (preparations for Albania), Elena, Zinaida, Irina, Despina, Chara, Eleni, LaVerne, Albert, Nicholas, Walter/Taras, George Dominica and her family, Misty, Donna, Vicki, Mary Anne, Autumn, Anna, Randell, Maria, Gayla, Carson/Brenda, Chris, Mary/Elizabeth/Amy, Paul, Mary, James, Josie, David, Chloe, Thuy, Bob, Bob, Rachel, Hayden, Becky, Clint, Pat, Jacob, Hannah, Ray, Elena, Michael, Joshua, Natalie, Tammy, Michael/Alexander, Liz, Gwen, Lee, Susan, Dotty, Robert, Rick, Brendan, Judy Alla/Anatoly, Natalia, Sophia/Natalia/Mike, Liliya/Artem/Sergey, Vasily/Pavel/Eudokia, Ricardo/Veronica, Eldon, Rachel, Rebecca, Rick/Margie, Jim/Pam, Andrew, Anna, Marci, Sergei/Jessica, Dorothy/John Margaret/Calvin, James, Helen, Brian, Elizabeth, Patty, and those serving in the armed forces at home and abroad, especially the Servants of God DAVID, MICHAEL, SAVVAS, ANTHONY, and SERGEI

Inside Story Headline

Pray for the Catechumen: Alexei Kennedy, David Williams, Shanasia Brown, John and Juanita Scheer, the Chandlers (Anthony, Heather, Ryan, Allyson, Olivia, and Norah), and Sarah Chapman

Blessed Name Day:

Nov 4 St Raphael of Brooklyn -RAPHAEL Nelson

Nov 8 Holy Archangel Gabriel - GABRIEL Grandowski, GABRIEL Montgomery, GABRIELLE Wright,

Nov 8 Michael the Archangel– Rdr MICHAEL Galloway, MICHAEL Grandowski, MICHAEL Montgomery, MICHAEL Wright

Nov 11 St Phillip the Apostle -PHILIP Peacock

Nov 16 Apostle Matthew-Reader MATTHEW Groh, MATTHEW Falkowski, MATTHEW Thurner

Nov 25 St Catherine the Great Martyr - CATHERINE Maclaughlin

Nov 23 Alexander Nevsky- ALEXANDER Macdonald

Nov 30 Apostle Andrew - ANDREW Treckman, Rdr ANDREW Wilson

BLESSED SLAVA (Family Patronal Saint)

The Long Family - Nov 8 St Michael the Archangel

HAPPY BIRTHDAY!

Anna Nelson, Caryn Macdonald

May God grant you many years!

Missionary Update

Dr. Jeffrey and Caryn Macdonald have been accepted as Missionary Candidates by the Orthodox Christian Mission Center, to serve the Orthodox Church in Albania. Dr. Macdonald will be assisting the Holy Resurrection Seminary outside of Durres as a long-term missionary. His Beatitude Archbishop Anastasios maintains education as a top priority in his vision for the Church's social outreach in Albania.

Jeffrey says they are “slowly” making progress towards the needed funds required by the Orthodox Christian Mission Center. Please take a moment to talk with Jeffrey and Caryn about how you can support their mission. If you do not have one of their missionary cards in your icon corner, please pick one up and support them with your prayers and any resources you can provide will be appreciated.



Orthodox Kid's Page: The Three Children

There were once Three Holy Children, Hananiah (Shadrach), Mishael (Meshach), and Azariah (Abednego) who were all friends of the Prophet Daniel and from the tribe of Judah.

During the reign of King Jechonias they were taken prisoner and led away as captives with other Jews during the Babylonian Captivity. Eventually they were taken into the court of King Nebuchadnezzar as servants, stripped of their Hebrew names, and given Babylonian names which honored pagan gods.

King Nebuchadnezzar constructed a golden image of himself which he orders the people of Babylon to worship, but Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah defied the king's order, refusing to worship anyone but God alone.

Nebuchadnezzar, in a fit of rage, ordered the three children be thrown into a fiery furnace. Inside the furnace, Azariah prays for the forgiveness of his sins and those of his people, asking God to demonstrate his power to the Babylonians.

They are delivered from the fire by an angel who makes the flames feel like a cool breeze over dew as the three children walked in the fire of the furnace not burned but praising God. Nebuchadnezzar walked



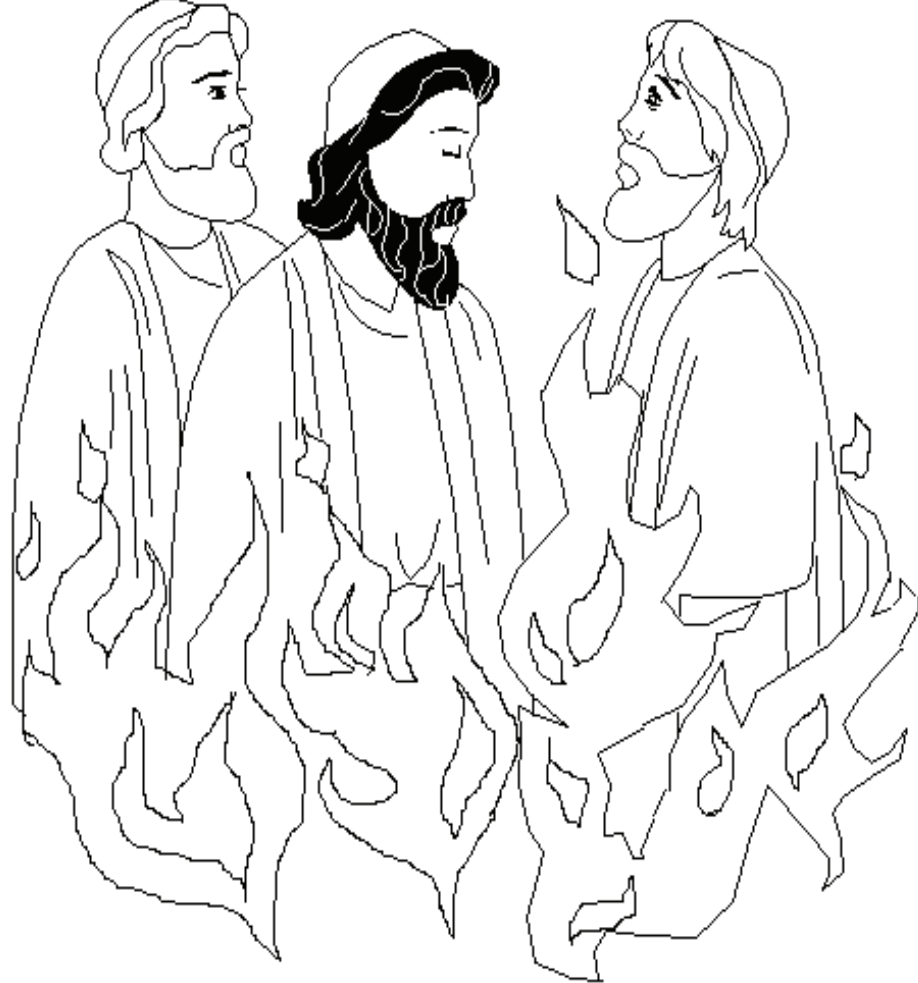
up to the mouth of the burning fiery furnace and said, "Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, you servants of the most high God, come out and come here."

When the three children emerge, Nebuchadnezzar ordered the people to worship their God instead of the idol.

Family Helps

1. In the icon above, can you find the three children? What are they standing in?
2. The Church also teaches that it was Christ taking the form of an angel who saved the youths from their torment. Do you see the angle in the icon has a halo bearing a cross, indicating that He is Christ?
3. Have you ever attended a orthros service? The song of the three children is alluded to in odes seven and eight of the canon in orthros and on other occasions in liturgical season.
4. Because of the Witness of the Three Children, what did Nebuchadnezzar order?

Color page



Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego were thrown into a fiery furnace but God protected them so they wouldn't burn even a hair on the head.

Daniel 3:8-30

Kontakion (Tone 6)

You did not worship the graven image,
O thrice-blessed ones,
but armed with the immaterial Essence of God, you were glorified in a trial by fire.
From the midst of unbearable flames you called on God, crying:
Hasten, O compassionate One!
Speedily come to our aid, for You are merciful and able to do as You will.