

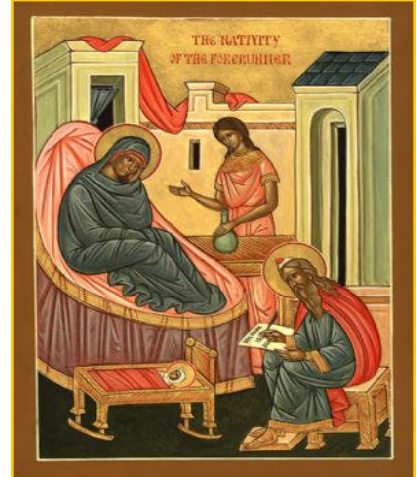
# The Voice In The Wilderness

*"A voice crying in the wilderness:  
Prepare ye the way of the LORD..."  
Matthew 3:3*

The Newsletter of St. John the Forerunner Antiochian Orthodox Christian Church, the Diocese of Wichita and Mid-America, an Orthodox Christian witness to Cedar Park and Central Texas.

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**His Grace Bishop Basil  
of Wichita and Mid-America**

## **Bishop Basil to attend the Feast of the Nativity of St. John the Forerunner June 23 thru June 24**

Our beloved archpastor, Bishop BASIL will be joining us this year as we celebrate the Nativity of our Patron and Protector, St John. The festal services will begin with Great Vespers at 7pm on Friday, June 23.

Festal Orthros and Hierarchial Divine Liturgy will be served at 8am and 10am on Saturday, June 24. Following Great Vespers at 5pm on Saturday evening, there will be a parish banquet at 7pm, and then Bishop BASIL will also join us for liturgy on Sunday morning. It will be a wonderful time with our Father in Christ.

Bishop Basil has many accomplishments to include *The Liturgikon: The Book of Divine Services for the Priest and Deacon*, which was published by the Archdiocese's Antakya Press in 1989 (reprinted in 1994). Bishop Basil is also noted for his love of music, he has translated and arranged several settings for Orthodox Hymns in English.

# FEAST OF HOLY PENTECOST

## INTRODUCTION

The Feast of Holy Pentecost is celebrated each year on the fiftieth day after the Great and Holy Feast of Pascha (Easter) and ten days after the Feast of the Ascension of Christ. The Feast is always celebrated on a Sunday.

The Feast commemorates the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the Apostles on the day of Pentecost, a feast of the Jewish tradition. It also celebrates the establishment of the Church through the preaching of the Apostles and the baptism of the thousands who on that day believed in the Gospel message of salvation through Jesus Christ. The Feast is also seen as the culmination of the revelation of the Holy Trinity.

In [The Orthodox Faith](#) by Fr. Thomas Hopko, Dean Emeritus of St. Vladimir's Seminary, Crestwood, NY, Father Thomas notes that " the Old Testament **Pentecost** was the feast which occurred fifty days after Passover. As the Passover feast celebrated the exodus of the Israelites from the slavery of Egypt, so Pentecost celebrated God's gift of the ten commandments to Moses on Mount Sinai. "

Likewise in the New Testament, father Thomas notes that, "In the new covenant of the Messiah, the Passover event takes on its new meaning as the celebration of Christ's death and resurrection, the "exodus" of men from This sinful world to the Kingdom of God. And in the New Testament as well, the Pentecostal feast is fulfilled and made new by the coming of the "new law," **the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the disciples of Christ.** "

*When the day of Pentecost had come they were all together in one place. And suddenly a sound came from heaven like the rush of a mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared to them tongues as of fire, distributed as resting upon each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit ... (Acts 2:1-4).*

On the day of Pentecost (*Jn 14:26, 15:26; Lk 24:49; Acts 1:5*) the Holy Spirit that Christ had promised to his disciples came. The apostles received "the power from on high," and they began to preach and bear witness to Jesus as the risen Christ, the King and the Lord. This has traditionally



been called the birthday of the Orthodox Christian Church.

Father Thomas notes that "In the liturgical services of the feast of Pentecost, the coming of the Holy Spirit is celebrated together with the full revelation of the divine Trinity: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. For this reason Pentecost Sunday is also called **Trinity Day** in the Orthodox tradition. Often on this day the **icon of the Holy Trinity** -- particularly that of the three angelic figures who appeared to Abraham, the forefather of the Christian faith - is placed in the center of the church." This icon is used with the traditional Icon of the Pentecost which shows the tongues of fire hovering over the Twelve Apostles, the original prototype of the Church, who are themselves sitting in unity surrounding a symbolic image of "cosmos," the world.

The Pentecost is called an apocalyptic day, which means the day of **final revelation**. It is also called an **eschatological** day, which means the day of the **final and perfect end** (in Greek *eschaton* means the end). For when the Messiah comes and the Lord's Day is at hand, the "last days" are inaugurated in which "God declares: ... I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh." This is the ancient prophecy to which the Apostle Peter refers in the first sermon of the Christian Church which was preached on the first Sunday of Pentecost (*Acts 2: 1-7; Joel 2: 28-32*).

The Feast of Pentecost is not simply the celebration of an event which took place centuries ago. It is the celebration of what must happen and does happen to us in the Church today. "We all have died and risen with the Messiah-King, and we all have received his Most Holy Spirit. We are the "temples of the Holy Spirit." God's Spirit dwells in us (*Rom 8; 1 Cor 2-3, 12; 2 Cor 3; Gal 5; Eph 2-3*). We, by our own membership in the Church, have received "the seal of the gift of the Holy Spirit" in the sacrament of chrismation. Pentecost has happened to us. [[The Orthodox Faith](#) by Fr. Thomas Hopko, Dean Emeritus of St. Vladimir's Seminary, Crestwood, NY ]

The **Divine Liturgy of Pentecost** reinforces our baptism into Christ as we once again sing the verse from Galatians as a replacement for the Thrice-Holy Hymn. The epistle and gospel readings tell of the Spirit's coming to men. Read the kontakion and troparion below to see the effects of the Holy Spirit upon the world. The hymns *O Heavenly King* and *We have seen the True Light* are sung for the first time since Easter, calling the Holy Spirit to "come and abide in us", and proclaiming that "we have received the heavenly Spirit." Often, The church building is decorated with flowers and the green leaves of the summer to show that God's divine Breath comes to renew all creation as the "life-creating Spirit."

*Blessed art Thou, O Christ our God, who hast revealed the fishermen as most wise by sending down upon them the Holy Spirit: through them Thou didst draw the world into Thy net. O Lover of Man, Glory to Thee (Troparion).*

*When the Most High came down and confused the tongues, he divided the nations. But when he distributed the tongues of fire, he called all to unity. Therefore, with one voice, we glorify the All-Holy Spirit! (Kontakion)*

The **Great Vespers of Pentecost evening** features three long prayers at which the faithful kneel for the first time since Easter. The Monday after Pentecost is the **Feast of the Holy Spirit** in the Orthodox Church, and the Sunday after Pentecost is the **Feast of All Saints**. This is the logical liturgical sequence since the coming of the Holy Spirit is fulfilled in men by their becoming saints, and this is the very purpose of the creation and salvation of the world. "Thus says the Lord: Consecrate yourselves therefore, and be holy, for I your God am holy" (*Lev 11:44-45, 1 Pet 1:15-16*).

## PRAYER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Heavenly King, Comforter, the Spirit of Truth, everywhere present and filling all things, Treasury of blessings and Giver of life: come and abide in us, cleanse us from every impurity and save our souls, O Good One.

## HYMNS OF THE FEAST

### Troparion (Plagal Tone Four)

Blessed are You, O Christ our God, who made fisherman all-wise, by sending down upon them the Holy Spirit, and through them, drawing all the world into Your net. O Loving One, glory be to You.

### Kontakion (Plagal Tone Four)

When the Most High came down and confounded tongues of men at Babel, He divided the nations. When He dispensed the tongues of fire, He called all to unity, and with one voice we glorify the Most Holy Spirit.

### Resources:

- 1) [Orthodox Faith](#) by Fr. Thomas Hopko, Dean Emeritus of St. Vladimir's Seminary, Crestwood, NY.
- 2) [The Incarnate God: The Feasts of Jesus Christ and the Virgin Mary](#), Catherine Aslanoff, editor and Paul Meyendorff, translator (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1995)

## ORTHOPRAXIS: How to Celebrate Pentecost at Home by Fr. Anthony Coniaris

Since Pentecost is the birthday of the Church it can be celebrated in the home by baking a special birthday cake for the Church and serving it as dessert. One candle may be used to represent each 100 years of the Church's existence. Nineteen or twenty candles may be used. The whole family can sing "Happy Birthday" to the Church and blow the candles out together.

The opportunity may be used to read and discuss the Scripture lessons that are read in Church on Pentecost (**Acts 2:1-11** and **John 7:37-52, 8:12**).

A discussion can follow on what the Church is. It is the Body of Christ through which He continues to be present in the world today: to teach us, forgive us, guide us, bless us, strengthen us. After Christ ascended into heaven, He established the Church to carry on His work. When we go to Church on Sunday, we are going to Christ. When we support the Church with our offerings, we are supporting Christ. When we listen to the Church, we are listening to Christ.

### The Body of Christ

The Church is called the Body of Christ because just as Christ once used His physical Body to do the work of God in the world, so now He uses His mystical Body, the Church.

On the long high front wall of a church that was just being completed, an artist started painting a picture of Christ as the Good Shepherd. Only the firm brush strokes outlining the head could be seen. A stranger stopped in and asked curiously, "When will the picture be finished?"

A workman replied. "That picture? It is finished."

"Finished?" repeated the startled visitor. "Why all it is, is the outline of a head. Most of it is still missing - the eyes, mouth, arms, legs and feet - the whole body is missing!"

"You won't see that on a wall," the workman replied. "The body of Christ is the congregation of people who will be worshipping in this church. The Body of Christ is the Church."

St. Paul writes, "He (Christ) is the head of the body, the Church" (Col. 1:18). St. [John] Chrysostom said, "Christ is the head of the body, but what can the head do without hands, without feet, without eyes, without ears, without a mouth?"

As the Head of the Body, Christ issues orders to the various members. He is the brain; the One in Whom all the fullness of God dwells bodily. What a privilege God bestows on us when He ties us so intimately with Christ and with each other as to make us constitute one Body with Him as the Head. When we meditate on this analogy, we come to look at prayer as the members of the Body (the Church) reporting for duty to the Head (Christ). He continues to be present in the world today.  
The Holy Spirit

Finally, parents may explain that Pentecost is the day on which the Holy Spirit came to us in His fullness. On this day we kneel three times during the church service as we pray together with the priest that the same Holy Spirit Who filled the first apostles with God's presence and power may fill us today with the same power that we may experience the reality of God in our lives.

The Holy Spirit must be constantly attained. He should be received daily. To achieve this, it is necessary to wait prayerfully and expectantly for Him as the apostles did before Pentecost. "All these with one accord devoted themselves to prayer..." (**Acts 1:14**). This kind of prayerful waiting is essential if we are to receive the Holy Spirit.

St. Seraphim of Sarov describes the whole purpose of the Christian life as nothing more than the receiving of the Holy Spirit: "Prayer, fasting, vigils and all other Christian acts, however good they may be in themselves, certainly do not constitute the aim of our Christian life; they are but the indispensable means of attaining that aim. For the true aim of the Christian life is the acquisition of the Holy Spirit of God. As for fasts, vigils, prayer and almsgiving, and other good works done in the name of Christ, they are only the means of acquiring the Holy Spirit of God... Prayer is always possible for everyone, rich and poor, noble and simple, strong and weak, healthy and suffering, righteous and sinful. Great is the power of prayer; most of all does it bring the Spirit of God and easiest of all is it to exercise."

It has been said that St. Seraphim in the above words sums up the whole spiritual tradition of the Orthodox Church. For, what is greater than to possess the Holy Spirit? And what is easier than the means by which He comes to us: prayer?

No prayer is complete unless it includes a petition to the Holy Spirit that He come to dwell in us. Thus, through prayer every day becomes Pentecost.

This would be a good time to teach your children one of the best known and most used prayers of the Orthodox Church. Almost every one of our church services begins with it. It is a prayer to the Holy Spirit and should be used often in your family devotions:

O Heavenly King, the Comforter, the Spirit of Truth, Who are everywhere present and fills all things, Treasury of good gifts and Giver of Life, come and abide in us, and cleanse us of all impurity, and save our souls, O Good One.

Copies of *Making God Real in the Orthodox Christian Home* may be ordered thru our parish bookstore or can be purchased from Light & Life Publishing for \$10.95 + SH. 4818 Park Glen Rd., Minneapolis, MN 55416 / 612-925-3888 / FAX 888-925-3918 / Web site: <http://www.light-n-life.com>.

## EDITORIAL: Ancient Faith Radio Presents the Orthodox Faith across the Airways

All Saints Antiochian Orthodox Church in Chicago provides a unique ministry to the Orthodox Christian and a new radio-evangelization tool to reach the unchurched. It is a little known internet radio ministry called Ancient Faith Radio that began in 2004.

Available 24 hours a day, Ancient Faith Radio ([www.ancientfaithradio.com](http://www.ancientfaithradio.com)) streams a radio format of Orthodox music, lectures, convert stories, prayers and other features into home and office computers in high quality stereo sound. Most of the media players readily and freely available will play Ancient Faith Radio including Real Player, Winamp, I tunes, Jukebox and others.

The radio station combines Eastern Christian chant and church music (and occasional Gregorian settings) with talks, sermons, readings from Ancient Christian writers, and appointed daily prayers with no commercial interruptions. The music—the bulk of the programming—is paradisiacal and elevating. It adds tranquility and reverence to our home at night. Daily Orthodox lectures are heard at 10:00am, 1:30pm, 8:00pm and 2:00am Monday through Friday Central Time. Daily, one can hear and pray the hours as they are prayed by over the radio. The rest of the day is filled with beautiful Orthodox music from a variety of jurisdictions that open the reality of a unified American Orthodox Church with a common faith presentation.

At last the Orthodox Church has its equivalent of Trinity Network, Moody Radio, or EWTN. Just as one would expect Baptist teaching from Moody Radio, or Roman Catholic teaching on EWTN, Ancient Faith Radio is unapologetically Eastern Orthodox and broadcasts teaching by some of its leading lights. In any one month one may hear the likes of Bishop Kallistos Ware, Father Peter Gilquist, or Khouria Frederica Matthews-Greene. Ancient Faith Radio lets the unchurched and inquirer know what Orthodox believers teach and practice.

I strongly recommend that if you have a computer with Internet, tune into Ancient Faith Radio as a reliable source for Eastern Orthodoxy teachings, prayer, and music. I think you will be glad that you did!





## Saintly Women To Live By: SS, Mary and Martha the sisters of St. Lazarus

The Holy Myrrh-bearers Mary and Martha, together with their brother Lazarus, were especially devoted to our Savior, as we see from the accounts given in the tenth chapter of Saint Luke, and in the eleventh and twelfth chapters of Saint John. They were born in Bethany, a suburb of Jerusalem. Jesus knew his father Simon and used to visit their home every time he was in the area. He developed so a close friendship with Lazarus, Mary, and Martha who followed his teaching and ideals. The righteous sisters Martha and Mary were believers in Christ even before He raised their brother St Lazarus from the dead

At the age of thirty Lazarus became very ill. His sisters Martha and Maria informed Jesus of the seriousness of his condition but he did not seem to be concerned. By the time Jesus arrived at Bethany, Lazarus was dead and buried for four days. It was the crying of these two sisters and their faith that lay the groundwork for the miracle that Jesus knew he would perform with the dead Lazarus. Jesus went straight to his grave, he prayed and then raised his voice: "Lazarus, come out", he shouted. And indeed, in a while Lazarus came out of the grave wrapped with his burial cloth. He was un-wrapped and returned with Jesus to his house, accompanied by the crowd. Following this miracle even more people believed in Christ and followed his teachings.

After the Crucifixion and burial of the Lord Jesus Christ, Mary and Martha met with Mary Magdalen, Mary the wife of Cleopas, Joanna, Salome, mother of the sons of Zebedee, Joseph of Arimathea, and Nicodemus to anoint the body of the Savior but they found the tomb was empty. Seeing the empty tomb and believing the testimony of Mary Magdalene, they became early witnesses of the empty tomb and witnesses to the resurrection of Christ.

After the murder of the holy Archdeacon Stephen a persecution against the Jerusalem Church broke out, and wicked men sought to kill Lazarus after the death and resurrection of Jesus as he was living proof of the Lord's ability to resurrect the dead. When Lazarus learnt about their plans he found refuge at Kition (Larnaca) of Cyprus. There he was met by the apostles Paul and Barnabas, who ordained him as the first bishop of Kition. Lazarus became an example of a Christian. His sisters bore their own special testimonies about the Resurrection of Christ throughout their lives. His physical presence was an indication of God's love for his people while his spiritual activity symbolized the love of man for God. By his side were his two sisters Mary and Martha ministering with him to his flock. Lazarus and his sisters reposed in Kition.

# An Orthodox Christian viewpoint on *The Gospel of Judas*

## By Very Reverend Father Michel Najim

Christ is Risen! Truly, He is Risen!

Beloved brothers and sisters in Christ,

I greet you all with the Paschal greeting: Christ is Risen! Please pray for one another on the road towards Holy Pascha in the great joy and light of the Resurrection. For my part, I pray that this Holy Pascha will strengthen you and all the faithful to spread the spirit of philanthropy and self-sacrifice, so that our Risen Lord Jesus Christ will always reign in human hearts.

In spite of the media's relentless avalanche of anti-Christian propaganda concerning our Lord, I am confident that you are standing firm in your faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. Battling for our Orthodox Faith, which bears the Truth of Who Jesus Christ is, we must remain undismayed by attacks that the media launches against the accuracy and veracity of the four Gospels. The controversial publication of the Gospel of Judas, just a week before we celebrate Christ's resurrection at Easter, is sure to scandalize any faithful Christian.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the media is fascinated by Gnostic ideas that were popular in the days of early Christianity. Consequently, the media is seeking to resurrect these defunct ideas with this so-called Gospel of Judas as Christians celebrate the true Resurrection. Orthodox Christians, however, believe that the truth of the four Gospels stands eternally unwavering. We retain strong confidence in the authenticity of the New Testament and, in particular, of the four Gospels.

Unfortunately, any discovery of an ancient text, especially one rejected by the early Church, is lavished with all kinds of media attention. This recent "new gospel," better entitled the Judas Document, is neither "good news" (the meaning of "gospel") nor was it written by Judas Iscariot—nor is it even particularly "new." Although this ancient manuscript was recently found by some Egyptian peasants in the mid- to late-1970s, it was well known by the early Church Fathers. In fact, The Gospel of Judas was roundly condemned and refuted by the Fathers.

For example, St. Irenaeus (ca.125-202), bishop of Lyons, in his book *Against Heresies* mentions the doctrines of a Gnostic sect known as 'Cainites,' who declared that Cain (the son of Adam who murdered his brother, Abel, in a fit of envy) and all of the 'evil' characters of the Old Testament were to be venerated because of their 'persecution' by God. According to historians, this sect never had many adherents, and by the beginning of the Third Century AD, Hippolytus of Rome barely mentions them while listing the heretical groups of that time.

The Cainite heresy asserts that there are some sins that even Christ cannot cleanse with His Blood, and that the scars left on the body and the soul by old transgressions are sometimes so deep that they cannot be removed by the healing grace provided by Christ. What else is this but to say that Christ died in vain? St. Irenaeus reveals that this sect produced the fictitious Gospel of Judas now trumpeted everywhere in the media. While talk-shows and magazines assume this Gnostic text somehow gives us a glimpse at the "real" Jesus, in reality this fanciful narrative reveals more about the ancient Cainites (and the modern media) than it does about Christ.

The Gnostics put emphasis on the dualism between the material and spiritual worlds. For this reason, Judas, according to this "Gospel," is selected to free Jesus from his physical body, so that He can enter the spiritual world. Judas, therefore, performed a service to Jesus by betraying Him to those who would then crucify Him. Thus, He 'liberated' Jesus from His physical body, freeing Him to become pure spirit. Consequently, according to this Gnostic text, the Resurrection of our Lord's Body does not matter, but only that of the spirit. This is so preposterous that I will not even waste any Christian's time by explaining why this is false.

The word 'Gnostic' derives from the Greek word for 'knowledge,' gnosis. Thus, Gnostics focus on secret and mysterious knowledge. In this document Jesus reveals secrets to Judas that have been kept hidden from the rest of humanity. In the so-called Gospel of Judas, Jesus refers to Gnostic concepts such as 'aeons' and the 'eternal realm' of 'emanations.' He explains the so-called esoteric mysteries of the cosmos, and He them about "the error of the stars; and ... sent it ... on the twelve aeons." This document thus creates a false synthesis of ancient mythology and Christian theology, syncretizing elements from many different religions, Christianity being merely one of these. For this reason, this text is neither reliable nor authoritative, and it contradicts historically and theologically the Faith once and for all delivered unto the saints.

St. Athanasius declared of our four canonical Gospels: "Let no man add to these, neither let him take out from these." Whatever ancient document comes to light either now or in the future, it cannot undermine the authority of the four inspired canonical Gospels, which were established forever in the biblical canon by the Church in its Ecumenical Councils. For this reason, the falsely-titled Gospel of Judas, written long after Judas' death, does not merit the name "gospel."

In celebrating the Crucifixion and Resurrection of Christ, my beloved brethren in the Lord, we need to carry today's cross; for without the Cross there is no Resurrection. Our biblical and liturgical texts for Holy Week are the greatest reply we could give to the Gnostics of our time. Be assured that the enemies of the canonical Gospels will be "scattered like the smoke" and will "melt like the wax before fire!"

Christ is Risen! Truly, He is risen!

Father Michel Najim  
Dean of St. Nicholas Cathedral in Los Angeles.

Courtesy of the Antiochian Orthodox Christian website a [www.antiochian.org](http://www.antiochian.org). Father Najim is the Dean and Great Economos, Diocese of Los Angeles and the West. He is a renown theologian and linguist in the Antiochian Archdiocese.

## **Pentecost** **by Andy Bahbah**

TROPARION OF THE FEAST OF PENTECOST

*Blessed art Thou, O Christ our God, Who hast revealed the fishermen as most wise, having sent upon them the Holy Spirit, and through them Thou hast fished the universe, O Lover of Mankind, glory to Thee.*

Greetings in the Name of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ! A very joyous hymn for us, the Troparion contains extreme meaning for one of the greatest festivals the Orthodox Church celebrates called Pentecost. The feast is on the seventh Sunday after the Resurrection of Christ, or "Pascha." The Orthodox Church celebrates the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the Apostles. The giving of the Holy Spirit occurred fifty days after the Resurrection. In Greek, "Pentekoste" means "Fiftieth Day."

In the icon the Disciples are shown gathered in the same Upper Room where they shared the Last Supper with Christ. In the center of the group is the Book of the Gospels. This place of honor formally occupied by the actual physical Christ is now occupied by the Book of the Gospels, which the Holy Spirit has made the spiritual presence of Christ in the world. A crowned figure seated in the presence of the Disciples holds in a cloth twelve scrolls. This represents the reception by the entire world of the preaching of the twelve Disciples.

The event is described in the Acts of the Apostles, chapter two. We hear read during Liturgy: When the day of Pentecost was fully come, the twelve Apostles were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance...Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every man heard them speak in his own language. And they were all amazed and marveled, saying to one another, Behold, are not all these which speak Galileans? And how hear every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born? Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotomia, and in Judea, and Cappadocia, in Pontos, and Asia, Phygia and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in parts of Libya about Cerene, and strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes, Creatans and Arabians, we do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God. And they were all amazed (Acts 2:1-12).

Pentecost marks the first Evangelical movement of the Church as a whole. Christ has descended, died, resurrected, and ascended. The Apostles of Christ at that point were sent to "preach the good news." As we celebrate this feast of our Church, let us go as the Apostles with flaming tongues of fire, and let the Holy Spirit come into us. Let our light shine in doing God's wonderful works as "fishermen." Let us fulfill the wonderful glory and preach the Gospel with our words, and more importantly, with our actions. May God bless us always in His name and look towards His Second Coming.

Courtesy of the Antiochian Orthodox Christian website a [www.antiochian.org](http://www.antiochian.org)



Icon of The Nativity of St. John the Forerunner

## Reading the Icon of the Nativity of St John the Forerunner

The Icon of the nativity of St. John the Forerunner shows the scene soon after St. Elizabeth gave birth to a son. As seen by the cloth hanging over the buildings, this scene takes place indoors.

In this scene, we see St. Elizabeth on a birthing couch of the period, indicating that she gave birth to John in an ordinary way. Her hand at the side of her face indicates that she is pondering the mystery of a woman in her old age having an infant child. St. Elizabeth is attended by a relative, a midwife. The relative is asking her what the name of the new baby is to be.

When she responded with the name of John, everyone was amazed, since no one in the family had this name.

To the right of the icon we see St. Zechariah, still unable to speak after questioning Gabriel's announcement. When the family asked him about the child's name, he motioned for a tablet and wrote on it: "His name is John." Immediately his tongue was loosed, and St. Zechariah glorified God. He also prophesied about the Coming into the world of the Messiah, and of his own son John, the Forerunner of the Lord (Lk. 1: 68-79).

Note that the infant John is in a cradle at the foot of St. Elizabeth's bed indicating that he was born in a normal way and placed in a crib. How different this is from the manger that the Lord Jesus was laid in at his Nativity.

## *A meditation for June 24 : The Nativity of the Forerunner John - Promise and Fulfillment from God*

**"...for lo, you shall conceive and bear a son. No razor shall come upon his head, for the boy shall be a Nazirite to God from birth; and he shall begin to deliver Israel from the hand of the Philistines." Judges 13:5**

When the Angel of the Lord appeared to the wife of Manoah, he precisely named the dark cloud which hung over her life: "you are barren and have no children" (vss. 2,3). For whatever reason, the Danite couple had been unable to fulfill God's great blessing and command to "increase and multiply" (Gen. 1:21). Unlike most of mankind, they had borne no "children of providence" from God. However, the Angel further revealed to Manoah's wife a promise from God: "you shall conceive and bear a son" (vs. 3). The couple were to join the ranks of those rare marriage partners, like Abraham and Sarah (Gen. 17:15-21), Elkanah and Hannah (1 Sam. 1:1-18), and Zacharias and Elizabeth (Lk. 1:1-25), to whom God explicitly granted a "child of promise."

Let us observe that all the miraculous "children of promise" embody the prime message of Holy Scripture - God's promise and fulfillment - a theme which reached full-flower in the promised birth of the Lord and Messiah Jesus to His Virgin Mother, a promise and a fulfillment which, as St. Leo the Great notes, has "benefited myriads of the Faithful in its accomplishment." However, we should note that God did not give "children of promise" merely because He looked with mercy and compassion upon certain devout but barren couples. Like the Lord Jesus, the ultimate "Child of Promise," all "children of promise" served God's larger promise to benefit His covenant people. Through Isaac, God established an everlasting covenant with his descendants after him (Gen. 17:19 LXX; Lk.1:33). Samson began "to deliver Israel from the hand of the Philistines" (Jdgs. 13:5). Samuel continued the deliverance of Israel from the Philistines, by anointing David the son of Jesse to subdue these pagan overlords (1 Sam. 2:10). By understanding the special significance of all "children of promise," one can see why the Church assigns the account of God's promise and fulfillment to Manoah and his wife - to the Feast of the Nativity of the Forerunner John.

The Baptizer John was himself a "child of promise" presented by God to a barren couple (Lk. 1:7). But John, like Samson, was not given to his parents, Zacharias and Elizabeth, simply to bring them human "joy and gladness" (Lk. 1:14), but that John might "turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God" and "go before Him in the spirit of Elijah...to make ready a people prepared for the Lord" (Lk.1:16,17). In saying that the child of Manoah and his wife would only "begin to deliver Israel" (Jdgs. 13:5), one discerns that Samson is more a type of John the Forerunner than he is a type of the Lord Jesus; for St. John only "began" that which the Lord "fulfilled." As John himself said, "I indeed baptize you with water; but One mightier than I is coming....He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire" (Lk.3:16); and "He must increase, but I must decrease" (Jn.3:30). Finally, let us also note that both Samson and the Forerunner John, from their conception, were to be treated as "children of promise." The Angel warned Samson's mother: "Therefore beware, and drink no wine or strong drink, and eat nothing unclean, for lo, you shall conceive and bear a son. No razor shall come upon his head, for the boy shall be a Nazirite to God from birth" (Jdgs.13:4,5). In reinforcement, Zacharias, the father of the Forerunner, was directed by the Angel who announced John's birth, that the child should "drink neither wine nor strong drink. He will also be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb" (Lk.1:15).

***O holy Forerunner, John, how can we extol thee as it is meet to do? For by thy noble nativity, the barrenness of thy parents was undone and the Incarnation of Christ proclaimed.***

This article is courtesy of the Antiochian Orthodox Archdiocese of North America,  
[www.antiochian.org](http://www.antiochian.org)



## **WHO WE ARE TO BECOME ,WHO WE CAN BE**

*By Archpriest Steven Rogers*

There are perhaps no two men more greatly revered yet so seemingly different than Saints Peter and Paul.

Commemorated by the Orthodox Church on June 29, Saints Peter and Paul, “the heads of the Apostles” as described throughout the hymnody of the feast, are especially loved by the Church of Antioch, where Peter served as its first bishop and Paul set forth on his great missionary travels. Peter, who preached on the day of Pentecost when 3,000 were converted to the faith, and Paul, the greatest missionary the world has ever known and author of over half of the New Testament, were two of the most powerful instruments ever raised up by God to spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ and to found This holy Church. Their preaching and the power of God within them literally transformed the world. Both lived completely for Christ and both died a martyr’s death in Rome by order of the evil Roman emperor Nero.

Their power and end were the same, and yet when we first meet them in scripture, they are so seemingly different. There is Peter, the fisherman, simple and uneducated. There is Paul (then Saul), the Pharisee, brilliant and educated, learned in Jewish, Greek and Roman thought. There is Peter, emotional and impulsive, often speaking and acting hastily but always remorseful. There is Paul, seemingly cold and calculating, a powerful and even ruthless intellect, able to persecute and kill without remorse.

No two men could be more different than Peter and Paul — one driven by fire and emotion, the other by coldness and intellect.

Yes, these men were vastly different. But they had one thing in common — one thing that transcended their differences and made them one. That one thing was a personal encounter with the Son of God.

Peter encountered Christ and was raised up from his humble beginnings to a man of power. Paul encountered Christ and was lowered from his lofty position to a man of godly humility. Both gave up what they were, to become what God desired them to be. And through them the whole world was changed.

Oftentimes, we look at ourselves with our limitations and inadequacies and feel we have nothing to offer to God. We shy away from serving His Church because we feel we have no skills or gifts to offer. We see others with all their gifts, and we back away thinking there is nothing within us that God can use.

Often times, in our pride and arrogance, we feel we are above many of the simple tasks and labors that are so much a part of the ongoing life of God’s Church.

Seen together, Saints Peter and Paul teach us a great lesson — that no matter who we are — no matter our backgrounds, our talents, our station in life — if we offer who we are completely to God, He will make us who we are supposed to be. If we offer ourselves completely to God — both our abilities and our limitations — He can and will use us to the glory of His kingdom. If we offer ourselves completely, whether we are a simple fisherman or a towering intellectual, the world will see God within us.

God created us who we are and He came into the world to make us all we can be. Peter continued to be Peter and Paul continued to be Paul, but it was Christ within them that made them into all that God desired them to be.

And so it is with us. If we offer ourselves to God with all our strengths and weaknesses, He will use us to the glory of his Kingdom. As we, the Church of Antioch, gather together to celebrate the feast of our beloved Apostles Peter and Paul, those "luminaries to those in darkness, two rays of the sun," let us commit ourselves to give all that we are to God as they did, so that like them, we may radiate the love of God into a cold and unbelieving world.

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## *From the Pastor's Desk*

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

June is going to be an exciting month for our community. On Sunday, June 11<sup>th</sup>, Pentecost Sunday, we will finish up our Capital Stewardship Campaign, "Make Firm the Foundation of this House, O Lord", by taking up our first actual offering for the building project during the liturgy. Following the liturgy, we will have a potluck and our annual talent show. Then, two weeks later, our beloved hierarch, Bishop BASIL, will be with us for our patronal feast.

Here's the schedule for the weekend:

### Friday, June 23

Great Vespers for the Nativity of the Forerunner 6pm  
Parish Banquet at the Wingate Inn, Round Rock 7:30pm

### Saturday, June 24

Orthros 8am  
Hierarchical Divine Liturgy for the Feast 10am  
Great Vespers 6pm

### Sunday, June 25

Orthros 8am  
Divine Liturgy 10am

The services are always the highlight of Bishop BASIL's visits, but the banquet will also be a wonderful occasion. The Wingate Inn is located just off I -25 at Exit 253. The meal will be catering by the Dagar family of St Elias, and the menu includes Grille Shrimp with creole sauce or Pasta Primavera, Greek Salad, Grilled Marinated Vegetables, Rice, Rolls, Dessert, and a drink. The price for the meal is \$14.00 for adults and \$7.00 for children. If the price tag for your family is too steep, please let me know, and we will make arrangements for you to attend the banquet as a guest of the parish, because we want each and every member of our community to be able to join us in this meal with our bishop. We will also be inviting the other parishes in the Austin area, so please get your tickets as soon as possible. They can be purchased from Becky Thurner.

As we finish up our Capital Stewardship Campaign, we are looking forward to Bishop BASIL's visit, so that, as we celebrate our parish feast day, we can share with him the exciting direction in which our

community is headed. Please keep our campaign and the preparations for His Grace's visit in your daily prayers, and make plans to be a part of all the extraordinary things that are going on at St John's.

your unworthy priest  
Aidan +



## *Food for the Kingdom*



**St. John's Bread** is a fruit that are pods from trees grown in the Orient, Mediterranean and Italy. The pods are flat, curved, leathery and brown with a purplish tint. The pods contain a sticky pulp and hard pea-like seeds. The pulp taste similar to chocolate and are used in manufacturing drinks and syrups, and for flavoring ice cream. The pulp is also dried and sold as a substitute for cocoa. Biblical scholars believe John the Baptist, later known as St. John, sustained himself in his desert life by eating carob pods. The belief is so well-established that a common name for the carob tree is St. John's Bread. John the Baptist is also the likely source of the name locust bean, as it is reported that he subsisted on "locusts and wild honey." The locusts are believed to be the carob pods, not the insect, and they actually have a sweet, honey-like taste. It is also known as "honey locust" and "carob." We thought we would share with you several carob or "honey locust" recipes in honor of St. John the Forerunner who ate honey locusts in the wilderness as a child.

### **Carob Fudge (no-oil)**

Ingredients:

- 1 cup of honey
- 1 cup of carob powder
- 1/2 cup of toasted sesame seeds
- 1 cup of peanut butter
- 1 cup of sunflower seeds
- 1/2 cup of sweetened shredded coconut
- 1 teaspoon of peppermint extract
- 2 teaspoons of vanilla extract

Directions:

- 1) in a sauce pan heat the honey and peanut butter gently.
- 2) Then fold in other ingredients when the mixture is soft
- 3) Pour on to a non-stick 8X8 inches baking dish or dish sprayed with a nonstick cooking spray
- 4) Spread to 1-2 inches thickness
- 5) Chill then cut into squares

## Carob Date Loaf (no-oil)

### Ingredients:

1 cup pitted dates, cut up  
1-1/2 tsp. baking soda  
1/2 tsp. salt  
1/4 cup carob powder  
3 Tsp. safflower shortening  
3/4 cup, plus 1 Tsp., boiling water  
1 tsp. orange blossom water or vanilla extract  
3/4 cup honey (warmed to pouring consistency)  
1-1/4 cups whole wheat flour

### Directions:

Preheat the oven to 350°.

- 1) Place the dates, baking soda, salt, and carob powder in a mixing bowl. Toss lightly with a fork.
- 2) Add the shortening and boiling water, but do not stir. Let stand 20 minutes.
- 3) Combine the eggs and orange blossom water or vanilla.
- 4) Add the honey and flour, stirring until well blended.
- 5) Add the date mixture, stirring just to blend.
- 6) Pour into a well-greased 9- by 5-inch loaf pan.
- 7) Bake 45 minutes, or until toothpick inserted comes out clean. Let cool before removing from pan.
- 8) Serve plain (fasting) or top each slice with plain yogurt sweetened with a little honey (nonfasting).

Yield: 1 loaf or 16 slices.

## St. John's Community News

**Thank You To Those who provided Refreshments for Khouria Frederica Matthews-Greene's Visit.** As always the women of the St. Photini AOCWNA came through with delicious treats to share with those who came to hear Khouria Frederica Matthews-Greene 's excellent presentation on the Orthodox Faith. Thank You!

**Sunday, May 28, and June 4- Adult and Youth Special Teaching in Stewardship.** On those Sundays we will be having Church School, but, during this session, we want the adults to join the middle school and high school students so that we can all learn what the Holy Scriptures teach about stewardship, and giving, and building programs. Also, we want everyone to bring their Bibles to each of the Church School sessions—we will even have prizes for the oldest Bible, the biggest Bible, the Bible that is most used and the Bibles that have the funkiest covers. Join us for a good time as Father Aidan leads the class and John Dunn provides the live music.

**Sunday, June 11- First Fruits Service** This will be Pentecost Sunday; it will also be the climax of our campaign as we hold our First Fruits Service. During the liturgy, we will actually take up the first offering for the commitments that we have made to the building program. It will be exciting to see what the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit will accomplish in and through our giving!

**The Parish Life Conference June 15<sup>th</sup> thru June 18<sup>th</sup> in El Paso\_** This year the event is being sponsored by St George parish in El Paso. The parish life conference is a great time to get together with friends from around the diocese; the conference also includes wonderful workshops and beautiful services. For more information, check out this address: [plcinfo@st.george-elpaso.org](mailto:plcinfo@st.george-elpaso.org).

**June 23 – 24 Our Parish Feast Day-** Our beloved archpastor, Bishop BASIL will be joining us this year as we celebrate the Nativity of our Patron and Protector, St John. The festal services will begin with Great Vespers at 7pm on Friday, June 23; On Saturday June 24, festal Orthros will be served at 8am and Hierarchical Divine Liturgy will be served at 10 am. Following Great Vespers at 5pm on Saturday evening, there will be a parish banquet at 7pm, and then Bishop BASIL will also join us for liturgy on Sunday morning. It will be a wonderful time with our Father in Christ, so please mark your calendars and be ready to make your reservations for the banquet (of course, as is always the case in our community, money should never, ever be an issue; even if you are worried that you might not be able to afford the banquet, just let me know, and plan on coming anyway; we will take care of the ticket price, because we want absolutely everyone to be able to have dinner with our bishop).

**If you know any teens who have some free time this summer**, please forward this information along to them!!

1. **Crossroad** - a ten-day vocational exploration program for up-and-coming high school seniors. This program is held on the Hellenic College/Holy Cross campus in Brookline, Massachusetts and is free. Participants take mini-classes from seminary professors, tour Boston, and engage in active discussions and activities about their faith. Spots are filling up fast! Visit <http://crossroad.hchc.edu>
2. **Ionian Village** - a summer travel camp in Greece for Orthodox youth of all ages. The camp grounds are located on the Ionian Sea, and campers travel to sites such as Olympia, Zakynthos, and Athens. There are still a few spots available. <http://www.ionianvillage.org/>

**Soup & Saints now on Tuesdays at 6:30 pm.** Soup and Saints hosted by Reader Mark is permanently moved from Wednesday nights to 6:30 Tuesday nights, beginning this week. All are invited for soup and a reading and discussion from the writings of the saints of the Orthodox Church--this is also a great low-key event to bring a non-Orthodox friend to!

### ***PARISH PRAYER LIST:***

**Pray for the Catechuminate:** Carol Lockett, Yvonne Hyma, Katrina Barnard, William Barnard, Rebekah Johns, Gregory Parsons, Robert Mahoney, and Beth Mahoney

**Pray for the Health of Body and Soul** of those who have requested your prayers: Archpriest Stephen Rhudy, Nun Seraphima Landon Lockett, Nadia Onjanow, Teresa Anna Sisko, those who serve in the Armed Forces, and Jacob, Nicole, Mary, and Dan King.

### ***Birthdays, Anniversaries, and Special Celebrations:***

#### **Happy Name Day:**

June 4 St Mary of Bethany – Patty MARY Lewis  
June 4 St Sophia of Ainos – Ulli SOPHIA Nelson

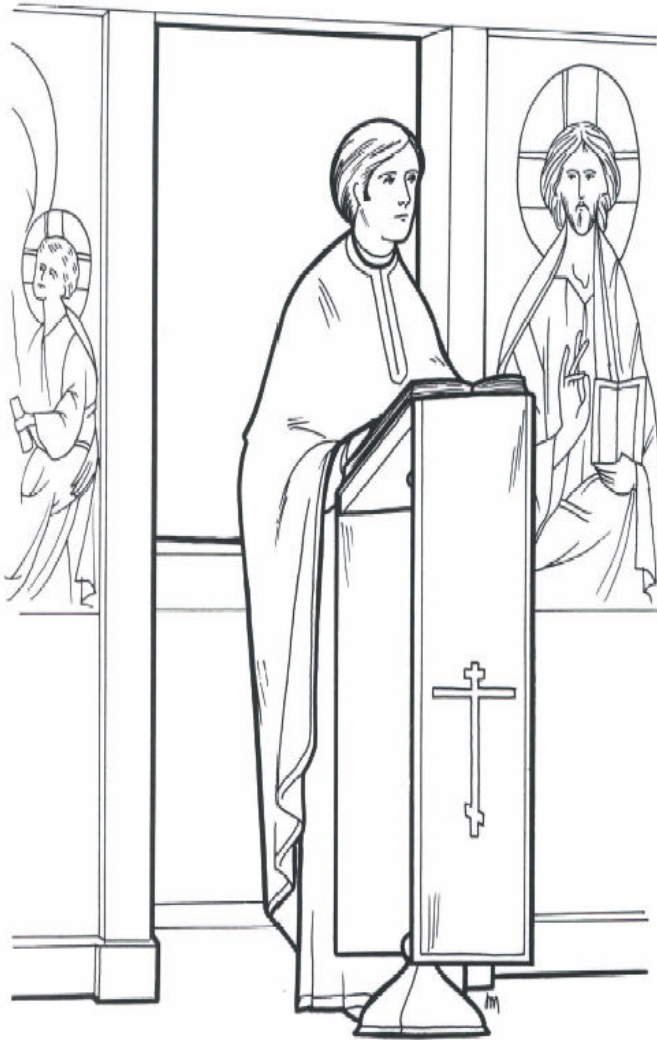
#### **Happy Birthday:**

June 1- Philip Nelson  
June 4 – Teresa Sisko  
June 6 – Brundage Latta  
June 9 – Alexander Macdonald  
June 16 –Shamassey Josie Long  
June 30 – Michael Galloway

#### **Happy Anniversary:**

June 11 – Randall and Anna Pitts  
June 14 – Reader David and Ulli Nelson

**GOD GRANT YOU MANY YEARS!  
ORTHODOX KIDS PAGE:  
Jesus is the Light of the World**



***Jesus stood up***

and proclaimed, “If any one thirst, let him come to me and drink.” He wanted to talk to people who were thirsty, not for water, but for lessons in how to please God.

The important people who heard this knew what he meant. They said to one another, “Can he be the one we have been waiting for, our new king--the messiah?” A big argument began with people who believed Jesus was the messiah, and others who did not.

Again Jesus spoke loudly, saying, “I am the light of the world; he who follows me will not walk in darkness but will have the light of life.” Jesus said this because he knew that his lessons are for all the world. His lessons are like light on the path to God.

1. What was the first thing Jesus said? It begins, “If any one . . . .”
2. Jesus wanted give lessons to people who wanted to please someone. Whom did they want to please?
3. Some people thought Jesus was the new king. They were waiting for a new king who would be like King David.
4. What did Jesus say at the end? It begins, “I am the . . . .”
5. Jesus’ lessons are like light on a path. Where does the path go?
6. We hear Jesus’ lessons when the Gospel is read. We stand and listen carefully.

every Sunday. It includes Pre-K, Grades K-2, 3-5, Middle School, and High School levels of reading and discussion questions that can be used by the family as part of their Christian education of their children .