

TWENTY-FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST



*Icon of Saints Philemon, Cecilia and Archippos -- November 22nd*

NOVEMBER 22, 2009

## TWENTY-FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

*TONE 8*

SCHEDULE OF SERVICES FOR THE WEEK OF NOVEMBER 23 – NOVEMBER 29, 2009

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 26	9:30 AM DIVINE LITURGY	THANKSGIVING DAY <i>IN THANKSGIVING; REQ: OLGA FEDUNYAK</i>
	6:00 PM GREAT VESPER	
SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 29	9:30 AM LITURGY –	TWENTY-SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST <i>FOR ALL PARISHIONERS</i>

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### *Remember in your prayers*

Please remember in your prayers those members of our parish, our family and friends who are ailing, are in hospitals, nursing homes and those who are not able to join actively in their community. Remember especially the following: Katherine Andrus, Walter & Isabella Bachynsky, Susie Boyko, Sonya Cronin, Helen Davis, Bohdanchik James, Maria Laszok, Lesya Loznycky, Alice Melnyk, and Sophia Skop. Please let Fr. James know if there is anyone else who should be remembered.



### *Prayers For Those Serving In The Armed Forces*



Let us especially remember in our prayers those family members and friends who are actively serving their countries in the Armed Forces: Luke and Slavamira Haywas, Elizabeth Heltsley, Oksanna Hirniak, Andrew Hryniw, Zenon and Susan Keske, Michael Lopes, Vasyl and Volodymyr Lylak, Paul Richelmi and Brian Tuthill. Please give any names of those you would like remembered in the Liturgies to Fr. James.

### **PARISH MEETING MUST BE POSTPONED**

Due to the recent break-ins at the parish and the time needed to deal with all the complications of these events, regrettably I must postpone the parish meeting until a later date.

### *God Provides!*

Due to the recent break-ins we needed a security system. While evaluating several bids, I contacted the Knights of Columbus and one of their members installs such systems. He came and evaluated our needs and then informed me that he would contact other benefactors and make sure that the hardware and installation will be **free of charge!** The \$30.00/month monitoring fee will still be our responsibility, but a parishioner has pledged to increase his monthly donation by that amount. God bless such generosity!

### *'Tis the Season Concert*

Ticket for the *'Tis the Season* Christmas Concert are selling quickly. If you wish to purchase tickets you should do so soon in order to save on the cost. Please see the flyer in the church hall for information on purchasing your tickets.

# Thanksgiving – The National Holy-day

*By Fr. George Morelli*

For all practical purposes, Thanksgiving Day is the closest we come to a National Holyday in the United States. Historically, it has been celebrated with everything from religious thankfulness, food, frolic and of course modern commercialism. Despite this, it is still a time for many Americans to ‘count their blessings’ and get together with family and/or friends.

Sometimes our approach to life stops us from ‘counting our blessings and giving thanksgiving to God. Psychologists call this pessimism. It is the belief that “bad events will undermine everything they do.” (Seligman, 1990). It is like always seeing the cup ‘half empty’. Those with optimism, confronted with “hard knocks” approach them as a challenge and try harder. Optimists tend to see the cup ‘half full’. They are thankful for what they have and work harder.

Common to our American national heritage is the action of our first president, George Washington who in 1789 declared a national thanksgiving holiday honoring the newly ratified Constitution, proclaiming: the people could thank God for "affording them an opportunity peaceably to establish a form of government for their safety and happiness."

Thanksgiving is part of many religious traditions: St. Paul told the Romans (14:5-6): “One man esteems one day as better than another, while another man esteems all days alike. Let every one be fully convinced in his own mind.

He who observes the day, observes it in honor of the Lord. He also who eats, eats in honor of the Lord, since he gives thanks to God;” The psalmist tells us: “All thy works shall give thanks to thee, O Lord, and all thy saints shall bless thee! (Ps 145:10). ... A Native American Iroquois thanksgiving prayer ends with the words: “we return thanks to the Great Spirit, in whom is embodied all goodness, and who directs all things for the good of his children.”

Some have taken the words of Deuteronomy (26:10) “I bring the first of the fruit of the ground, which thou, O Lord, hast given me.’ And you shall set it down before the Lord your God, and worship before the Lord your God”, and applied this as an offering to God of themselves. They forgo being with family and friends and give themselves to others in need, serving in food kitchens and the like.

However we commemorate this Holyday, let us see the fullness of the cup of gifts God has given us, and be thankful praying: “Glory to thee, who hast called me to life, ... revealed to us the beauty of the universe ... Glory to thee O’ God in ages!” (Akathist of Thanksgiving, Metropolitan Tryphon of Turkestan).

## Answers to Scriptural Questions

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|--|--|
| 1) a, Mark 10:37   | 6) b, “Gospel” means “Good News”.                                  |
| 2) a, true   | 7) b, Psalm 48:2 and Matthew 5:35                                  |
| 3) d, Matthew 10:6   | 8) d, It was Zacchaeus but he was a tax collector, not a Pharisee. |
| 4) b, St. Paul was not one of the Twelve. Judas was replaced by Matthias in Acts 1:26. | 9) b, St. John received the Revelation on Patmos.                  |
| 5) b, John 13:26-27.   | 10) b, Matthew 22:23.  |



## THE ADVENT SEASON

*By Archimandrite Roman Braga*

A season of six weeks opens the Christmas period. The season begins on November 15. It is said that this period originated in Gaul (today's France) in the fourth century and the duration of the season varied from four to seven weeks, until an ecumenical council established the season to be 40 days before Christmas as a fasting period – Advent.

Although as Orthodox Christians we do not call this period Advent as it is called in the Roman Catholic Church, the name seems proper; it consists of two Latin words: “ad venire”, meaning “to come to.” Advent’s message is that God is coming to the World in the person of Jesus Christ.

This coming of Christ into the world can be understood as a past experience, a present experience or a future experience.

### Past Experience

We may think of Christ Who came into the world 2000 years ago as the fulfillment of the promises of the Old Testament. This is a past experience and what we do every year at Christmas time is only a commemoration, an anniversary of that event. It is good to believe that God came to Earth on Christmas day, twenty one centuries ago; it is good to stress the divinity of Jesus at a time when many believe that Jesus was just a good guy, a revolutionist, a victim of the social condition of His time. Some call Him a genius, a superstar, but many do not even consider Him God.

Many Christians are not convinced of the necessity of God’s Incarnation, which was not only for the salvation of the human race, because God could have saved the world in other ways too, but His Nativity is the crowning of God’s act of creation. The entire Universe has been transfigured, sanctified, and deified, for the entire Universe participated in His Incarnation. He included in His body all the physical and chemical elements that constitute the bodies of men, plants, animals and of all the Universe. When the Bible talks about the creation of man out of dust it involves necessarily the

idea that man is comprised out of all the elements of the universe – he is a synthesis of the Universe, a crowning of God’s act of creation. That is why God became man, so He can transform and sanctify the entire Universe.

St. Paul says that God did not want to become an angel; He became man, making Himself like us in all aspects except sin. Sin was not given to us by God; sin is a fruit of our own choice.

The Bible also says that man was created in the image of God. It is a logical consequence of the act of creation. If man is like God then God had to become man in order to demonstrate the truthfulness of His creation.

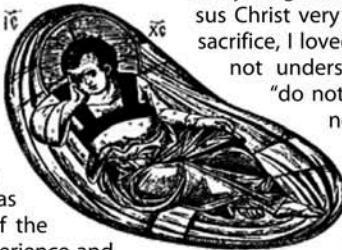
As a young man I revolted against God. I loved Jesus Christ very much, I loved His personality, His sacrifice, I loved the theology of love, but I could not understand the “Ten Commandments”:

“do not do this, do not do that, you shall not, you shall not, you shall not.” It was easy for me to see why the Jews did not keep the Commandments. It was easy for God to say: “do this, do that, do not do this, do not do that.”

But we are people, we live in the flesh, we fight temptations. There seemed to be an abyss between man and God that could not be bridged. Only later I understood that Christ, through His Incarnation bridged the gap between man and God. He became man to show us that the “Ten Commandments” can be fulfilled even in our human condition; they are not impossible for us. “I am the Truth, I am the Way, I am the Life.” If man was created in the image of God then God must resemble man, He must have everything man has, except He does not have sin.

### Present Experience

Most people do not understand that the coming of God is a present experience. They think that Christmas is just a commemoration like Lincoln’s birthday or Washington’s birthday. Christmas is not a birthday. God must be understood eternally. Past and future do not exist in God. When Moses asked God, “What is your name?”, the answer was



"I am the Existing One." He who lives eternally. And if God is infinite, His acts, His gestures, are like Himself – eternal.

For instance, when we say that God created the world, we understand that His work continues. The world is not finished and will never be; God knows no rest; He works continuously, always creating new species of plants, animals, inspiring developments in science and so on.

When we say that God was Incarnate that means He Incarnates in each one of us, everyday, making us similar to Him. God may come to you this Christmas in the form of rebirth, either for the first time, if you did not believe in Him, or as a renewed birth with a deeper understanding of His divinity.

### **Future Experience**

As a future experience, Christmas means that Christ will return unpredictably at the end of the world. "He will come again, in glory to judge the living and the dead."

Since Advent promises the sure coming of the Lord, its message is "prepare, be ready." The Lord is coming whether the world is ready or not. Then how does Advent suggest that we be prepared? Through repentance, prayer and patience.

Advent is a time to become aware of one's sins; it is a penitential season, originally known as the "winter lent." During this season weddings are not allowed, not for the wedding itself, because marriage is a sacrament, but because of the social aspect of marriage.

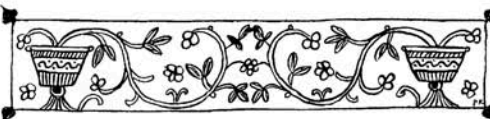
In the Winter Lent period, before Christmas, we must be filled with spiritual joy and hope. Advent stresses, not so much fulfillment, as anticipation of fulfillment: the Lord is coming. We must be like a bride, anticipating the wedding day. It is the quiet joy of anticipation and not the joy of celebrating a past event.

Of all seasons, Advent is the most difficult to observe because of the competition with the commercial world. The secular world, in fact, celebrates Christmas during Advent, not on Christmas day. On Christmas day everything is over. Even the churches fall pray to this secularization by decorating the churches and singing Christmas carols weeks before Christmas.

The coming of Christ is a culmination of a historical process coming down through the history of Israel. This is a climax of the plan of salvation. The Old Testament is a record of God's preparing the world for the coming of His Son. So Advent is the Old

Testament period of the church year. The child born in a manger in Bethlehem was none other than the Son of God, the promised "Messiah." Advent makes sense only as a time of preparation for the Messiah. This child is "true God of true God." In Him God invaded the history of mankind.

Because it is possible for Him to be born again in our hearts, at Christmas, it is important that we genuinely observe this lent and be spiritually prepared for His coming.



### **OUR PURPOSE IN LIFE**

*by the Sisters of the Monastery of the Transfiguration*

We all, every human being, share one purpose – to be so united to God that we become like Him in every possible way. "Like God" does not just mean a superficial resemblance, as in two sisters being alike with similar attitudes, habits, etc. The Christian life does not mean an external modeling of our behavior after what we think we see in God. Rather, it is a gradual process of becoming united to God in the most intimate way. God Himself wants to enter our hearts and transform us from within, so that He can dwell in us and we in Him in a union of love.

As this is difficult to imagine, to help us the Fathers of the Church give an analogy of a piece of iron placed in the fire. The iron, while remaining iron, takes on the qualities of fire. In a sense it becomes fire, although if taken out it loses its fiery qualities. So also we, living plunged in the ocean of God's grace, while remaining human, take on all the qualities of God: His love, joy, peace, eternal life. If we then separate ourselves from God, we lose all those godlike qualities, until through repentance we can again be transformed by the fire of God's grace. Although this sounds very bold, this deification is what we were created for: to be united wholly to God, transformed by union with Him.

We may think that this transformation is impossible, that we are too weak, too sinful. For encouragement we look to the saints, who had the same problems and weaknesses we have. They, however, looked beyond these to God – and in proportion to their desire, God helped them by His grace. In the saints we meet people whose love, joy, and power are beyond human measure, because they are from God. And we can be like them.

## *Are you saved?*

I was originally saved over two thousand years ago when God the Son took on human flesh and offered Himself as a perfect sacrifice for all of mankind, defeating the power of sin by suffering on the cross and destroying death through His miraculous resurrection. I am being saved daily through my intentional decisions to follow Jesus' example within each situation that I find myself, viewing paradise not at just a "someday" destination but as the everyday experience of self-denial, of being filled through the Eucharist, obedience and love for others with Christ. I will, Lord have mercy, be saved at the great and final judgment when I give an account for a lifetime of actions, when it becomes clear whether or not I cooperated with the grace so generously bestowed upon me. Who of us, having been blessed beyond all comprehension should feel the need to ensure that regardless of all our choices, a reward will be ours, free and clear? Who of us dare to sit idle with our assurances, interpreting the conditions of the Bridegroom's invitation while our lamps for illumining the darkness run out of oil? My individual salvation is being worked out with fear and trembling through the unique responsibilities God deemed best to set before me. Based upon the model of the Publican who beat his breast and begged for leniency I am careful to not assume that I have a handle on the spiritual state of others. I would do best, rather, to stay focused on my own flagrant shortcomings, reverencing both friends and enemies all of whom were created in God's image as living icons of Christ Jesus. I share my faith, yes! But, not out of obligation. A soul that's found its meaning cannot help but be a witness to such joy. My ongoing testimony is presented through acts of service in accordance with Christ's commandment to love God by loving your neighbor. I pray ceaselessly for the courage to fight the good fight, staying faithful until my very last breath upon the earth.

### **WHAT IS A FIRST-PORTION GIVER?**

A First-Portion Giver is a believer who offers a first-portion of his time, talent, and financial resources out of grateful recognition of the fact that all he has, he holds in trust from God.



**TIME**

"Let us spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing. But let us encourage one another..."

Hebrews 10:24-25



**TALENT**

"There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but the same God works all of them in all men."

1 Corinthians 12:4-6



**RESOURCES**

"Concerning the collection for the saints..., on the first day of the week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in proportion to the income God has given you..."

1 Corinthians 16:2



### HOW WELL DO YOU KNOW THE SCRIPTURES?

- 1) What did James and John ask that displeased the other disciples?
  - a) to sit on Christ's right and left hand in the kingdom
  - b) to witness Christ's glory on Mount Tabor
  - c) to be saved from death
  - d) to judge the tribes of Israel
- 2) The word "Christ" means "Anointed".
  - a) true
  - b) false
- 3) Christ first sent the Twelve to preach to the \_\_\_\_\_?
  - a) Gentiles
  - b) Samaritans
  - c) Inhabitants of Jerusalem
  - d) House of Israel
- 4) After Judas betrayed Christ and left the Twelve, he was replaced by St. Paul, who was first called Saul.
  - a) true
  - b) false
- 5) What did Christ hand to Judas before he left to betray Him?
  - a) the money bag
  - b) a piece of bread dipped in the dish
  - c) a piece of broiled fish
  - d) a cup of wine
- 6) The word "Gospel" means "Salvation".
  - a) true
  - b) false
- 7) Jerusalem, the city of the great king, was built on Mount Olives.
  - a) true
  - b) false
- 8) Who was the Pharisee that climbed up into a sycamore tree so he could see Jesus as He was passing through Jericho?
  - a) Lazarus
  - b) Matthew
  - c) Zacchaeus
  - d) none of the above.
- 9) St. John was given the vision of Revelation on Cyprus.
  - a) true
  - b) false
- 10) Which Christian doctrine did the Sadducees reject?
  - a) Baptism
  - b) Resurrection
  - c) Restoration of the kingdom of Israel
  - d) Forgiveness of sins

**For answers, please see your Bible or page 3 of this bulletin.**



### WISDOM FROM THE FATHERS

A brother questioned Abba Poemen saying, "If I see my brother committing a sin, is it right to conceal it?" The old man said to him, "At the very moment when we hide our brother's fault, God hides hides our own and at the moment when we reveal our brother's fault, God reveals ours too."



Another brother questioned him in these words, "What does, 'See that none of you repays evil for evil' mean?" (1 Thess. 5:15) The old man said to him, "Passions work in four stages – first, in the heart; secondly, in the face; thirdly, in words; and fourthly, through deeds. If you can purify your heart, passion will not come into your expression; but if it comes into your face, take care not to speak; but if you do speak, cut the conversation short in case you render evil for evil."



One brother at Scetis committed a fault. A council was called to which Abba Moses was invited, but he refused to go to it. Then the priest sent someone to say to him, "Come, for everyone is waiting for you." So he got up and went. He took a leaking jug, filled it with water and carried it with him. The others came out to meet him and said to him, "What is this, Father?" The old man said to them, "My sins run out behind me, and I do not see them, and today I am coming to judge the errors of another." When they heard that they said no more to the brother but forgave him.



# **Українська Католицька Парафія Матері Божої Неустаючої Помочі**

Церква Святого Йоана Хрестителя

## ***Ukrainian Catholic Parish of Our Lady of Perpetual Help***

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**Парох:** о. Яків Бенькстон

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Fr. James' cell phone: (619) 905-5278

*[Patristic Wisdom on the Lord's Prayer Continued]*

### ***And Lead Us Not Into Temptation***

The request "lead us not into temptation" raises a difficult problem. If we pray God not to allow us to be tempted, what opportunity shall we have to give Him proof of our steadfastness and fidelity? For it is written: "Blessed is the one who endures temptation and overcomes it" (Jas 1:12).

Then what is the meaning of this phrase? It does not mean do not allow us to come into temptation. It means when we come into temptation, let us not be defeated by it. Job was tempted but he did not accuse the Divine Wisdom, he did not go down the road of blasphemy to which the tempter wanted to attract him. Abraham was tempted, and Joseph was tempted. But neither of them said "yes" to the tempter.

So praying the Lord's Prayer is like saying: "Together with the temptation, give us also the strength to overcome it" (1 Cor 10:13).

*..St. John Cassian*