

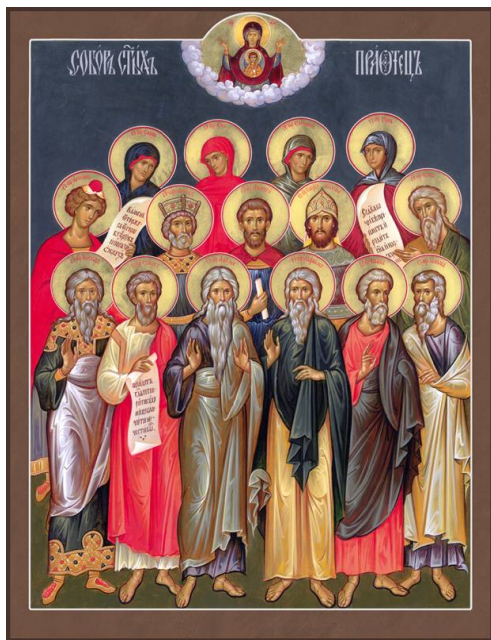
Sunday of the Forefathers of Christ

Twenty-Fifth Sunday After Pentecost

December 15, 2024

On December 15th we Commemorate:

*Hieromartyr Eleuthérius, Bishop of Illýria, and his Mother, Martyr Anthía.
Venerable Paul of Mount Látros. Stephen, Archbishop of Sourózh.*



Icon of the Holy Forefathers of Christ

Holy Wisdom Orthodox Mission

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Great Vespers, Saturday Evenings at 6:00 pm

Divine Liturgy, Sunday Mornings at 9:30 am (Hours at 9:05 am)

Paraklesis to the Theotokos, Wednesday Evenings at 6:00 pm

Very Reverend Archpriest Luke Uhl, Retired, Interim Rector

Holy Wisdom Orthodox Mission

*is a parish in the Diocese of the West
of the Orthodox Church in America*

*under the spiritual and ecclesiastical jurisdiction of
Archbishop Benjamin of San Francisco and the West*



Orthodox Church in America



Diocese of the West

EPISTLE AND GOSPEL READINGS

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Sunday of the Forefathers, Colossians 3:4-11

BRETHREN, When Christ Who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory. Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. Because of these things the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience, in which you yourselves once walked when you lived in them. But now you yourselves are to put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth. Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds, and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him Who created him, where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised nor uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave nor free, but Christ is all and in all.

Gospel of the Forefathers, Luke 14:16-24

THE LORD SPOKE THIS PARABLE: "A certain man gave a great supper and invited many, and sent his servant at supper time to say to those who were invited, 'Come, for all things are now ready.' But they all with one accord began to make excuses. The first said to him, 'I have bought a piece of ground, and I must go and see it. I ask you to have me excused.' And another said, 'I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I am going to test them. I ask you to have me excused.' Still another said, 'I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.' So that servant came and reported these things to his master. Then the master of the house, being angry, said to his servant, 'Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in here the poor and the maimed and the lame and the blind.' And the servant said, 'Master, it is done as you commanded, and still there is room.' Then the master said to the servant, 'Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled. For I say to you that none of those men who were invited shall taste my supper.' For many are called, but few are chosen."



Sunday of the Forefathers of Christ

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Put to death therefore what is earthly in you. *(Colossians 3:5)*

So that we might not destroy the grace that we have received, but instead that we may preserve it to the end and depart this life in possession of the treasure, there is need of something human: of endeavor, of effort, on our part.

After all, in most ordinary human affairs, it is neither reasonable nor usual for us to merely be content with having received our lives; rather we must constantly seek to preserve it.

So, it is with the grace of spiritual life. Having received it, we must constantly struggle and strive to preserve it. For we know that we must be sober and watchful, for our *“adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour” (1 Peter 5:8).*

It is obvious that all earthly things end in death; it is also clear that spiritual things continue to live. To live, therefore, we must put to death within ourselves what is earthly, and earnestly seek that which is of the Holy Spirit.

“Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old nature with its practices” (Colossians 3:9)

Since all sins are caused by a love of pleasure, by avarice, or by vainglory, we can say that it has its roots in these three vices and every lie is typically the fruit of these. For instance, when a man is desperate to fulfill his own desires, to gain something, or to avoid blame and humiliation he will lie to those around himself. Sadly, in the end no one will believe him even if does perchance speak the truth about something.

A man's life becomes a lie:

- When he is licentious and pretends to be temperate
- When he is a miser and speaks of almsgiving and compassion
- When he is ostentatious and goes in raptures over poverty
- When he praises virtue and pretends not to want to acquire it.

The life of such a man is a lie; he is not a simple, but a two-faced man; he is one thing on the inside and another on the outside. Every sin is death, because it is a turning away from God – Who is the Source of Life – and every sin is also a pursuit of earthly things that inevitably will pass away.

Lies are sins that kill us by destroying both our external credibility and our internal integrity. Lies destroy our relationships with others: with other people who can no longer trust us, and with God because we can no longer see Him while focused on ourselves.

Amen.

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Christmas is approaching and Jesus Christ, the Son of God, will appear on earth, and the Apostle Paul writes, “When Christ Who is our Life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory” *(Colossians 3:4).*

We are appearing with Him in the glory of his birth, for He walks as a Man among men with us on earth. And we *will appear* with Him when He returns in glory at His Second Coming.

It is essential for all of us to prepare spiritually for His appearing now at Christmas as well as for His appearing at the end of time. We must approach Christ with repentance from our sins. Otherwise His glory will blind us and drive us away both in this life and in the age to come!

Saint Paul identifies the major sins that we must eliminate, “Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. Because of these things the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience, in which you yourselves once walked when you lived in them” *(Colossians 3:5-7).*

Saint Paul first mentions sins that infect both the body and the soul, such as fornication and all related sins of the flesh. The Lord Himself clearly states, *“For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies” (Matthew 15:19-20).*

Saint Paul preached what Jesus taught the Apostles, “Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the Kingdom of God” *(1 Corinthians 6:9-10).*

Oh how many people today, even Orthodox Christians, “live together” before marriage – or without marriage. They are fornicators and cannot inherit the Kingdom of God!

Clearly many diseases and many family and social problems result from these lawless relationships. We must be very careful not to be seduced by the “modern” spirit of our time, which has overturned moral values to promote immorality as progress while regarding morality as a setback.

To guard against the unclean passions, Saint Paul teaches us to avoid *evil desire*. The Apostle James explains this further: “Each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death” *(James 1:14-15).*

Similarly, the Lord asks us to control our senses so as not to trigger sinful desires, *“I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart” (Matthew 5:28).*

Continued on page 5 ☞

Continued from page 4 ☞ Saint Paul mentions covetousness (greed), “*which is idolatry*” (*Colossians 3:6*). Jesus Himself referred to greed as an idol, “*No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon (the idol-god of riches)*” (*Matthew 6:24*).

Saint Paul identifies other passions of the soul that we must deter, lest when the Lord comes in glory we will not be excluded, “*You yourselves are to put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth*” (*Colossians 3:8*).

The Apostle also urges us to avoid bad company, “*I have written to you not to keep company with anyone who is sexually immoral, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or an extortioner – not even to eat with such a person*” (*1 Corinthians 5:11*).

Clearly anger and swearing disturb relationships between people, even leading to violence and murder. Some people do not understand this, responding with anger when reprimanded, saying, “*Nothing serious happened, we just exchanged words!*” Words: words which slaughter.

Finally, the Apostle Paul says, “*Do not lie to one another*” (*Colossians 3:8*). Whoever lies mimics the devil – as Jesus said, “*You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it.*” (*John 8:44*).

But Christ declared, “*I am the truth*” (*John 14:6*), so whoever lies detaches himself from Christ and the devil as his father. Do not be deceived by that wicked one who tells you that lying can be innocent. Listen instead to the Apostle Paul, “*Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him,*” (*Colossians 3:9-10*).

One Christmas night, Saint Jerome (AD 347-420) knelt in the Cave of the Nativity in Bethlehem and asked Jesus: “*What can I offer You tonight, O Lord?*” He heard Christ replying “*Jerome, I want your sins. Simply give Me your sins.*” Jerome was startled and said, “*My sins? What will you do with my sins, O Lord?*” Jesus responded: “*I want your sins so that I can forgive them, since this is why I came to this world.*”

This Christmas, let us repent (turn away) from our sins, and “give them to Christ” confessing before the Priest, that we may appear gloriously with Him both at the celebration of His birth as well as at His Second Coming.

Amen.

By Metropolitan Sotirios of Pisidia

From the Synaxarion (Calendar) Read at Matins

The subject of the blessed Abraham is known as much by the Magi, the Wise Men, as by common Christians. For the Book of Genesis, written by the Prophet Moses, which speaks of Abraham, is read to be heard by all Christians in the Church, during the fasting days of the Holy and Great Lent.

We learn from this Book, that our forefather Abraham was a gentile from the land of the Chaldeans, a nation before the Jews. Abraham’s father, Terah, was an idolater, and the divine Abraham was also an idolater, but he was not prevented by this from coming to know the true God. Rather, we should say something strange, for the great Abraham even by this idolatry was led to understand the true God.

When the renowned one understood that nothing created is God, and should not be worshiped as God, and having contemplated the good arrangement of things that exist, and by seeing these things which were made, he came to know their invisible Maker. And having come to know Him, he worshiped Him as God, Who upholds and governs all of creation, and designated these things which have come into being to be suitable and orderly.

He was therefore ordered by God to leave his homeland and relatives and go to the land of Canaan (where also Palestine and Jerusalem are located). Immediately he obeyed, without having doubt in his heart, for he had much faith towards God. For this reason, he received as a blessing for his faith, a son named Isaac who was born to him in his old age.

Then, through Isaac and his son Jacob, he became the father of many nations. Isaac was born of Abraham, Jacob was born of Isaac, and from Jacob was born Judah (from whose tribe Christ was born) and his eleven brothers, the Patriarchs of the twelve tribes of the Hebrew nation.

For this reason, therefore our God-bearing Fathers and Teachers, have arranged it for today to commemorate the divine Abraham, as the forefather from whom Christ was born. And they delivered this to be reckoned by us, not for a long period of many days, but near the birth in the flesh of our Lord Jesus Christ.

This was not done simply by chance, but according to the divine inspiration of the Holy Spirit. For the most-good and man-loving Son of God, made the Patriarch Abraham and his descendants His forefathers according to His human nature. Thus, the most divine Fathers rightly deemed for us to celebrate their memory as Forefathers, not long before the Lord’s Nativity according to the flesh.

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

“Many are called but few are chosen.” Indeed, all men are called, from Adam even to last child that will be conceived on the day of the Second Coming of Christ.

But, from the time of Adam, many men forgot their divine origin and sacred calling: the image and likeness of God.

Some peoples kept a vague memory of how God created the world. Some kept the memory of a great, universal flood. Others worshipped creation instead of the Creator: stones and trees, rivers and mountains, stars and the Sun.

The chosen are those who preserved the true history of mankind, the Jews, the ancient Hebrews. And today we commemorate all the righteous holy men and women who prefigured the life of Christ and foresaw Christ.

Abel was murdered by his brother Cain, prefiguring Christ Who was also murdered by men. Melchizedek the priest prefigures Christ the High Priest.

Enoch and Elias, who were taken up to heaven, prefigure Christ Who was also taken up to heaven. Noah, whose family alone survived the Flood, prefigures the baptism given to us by Christ.

Job the long-suffering prefigures the long-suffering of Christ. Abraham, who was asked to sacrifice his son Isaac, prefigures the sacrifice that God the Father made with His Son.

Jacob prefigures Christ in seeing the ladder that connects earth to heaven, enabling heaven to come down to earth and earth to rise up to heaven. Joseph, betrayed by his twelve brothers, prefigures Christ who was betrayed by His disciples.

Moses was given the graven words of Christ in the Ten Commandments, prefiguring the Word incarnate, Christ in the flesh. Joshua, whose name is the same as Christ’s, Jesus which means Savior, prefigures Jesus the Deliverer of His people.

David, related by blood to Christ, saw Christ in the Psalms which he wrote. Solomon expressed the Wisdom of God in his Books of Wisdom.

The Prophet Daniel saw the Holy Trinity through the Three Holy Youths in the furnace of Babylon. The Prophet Isaiah saw Christ the suffering Servant. The Prophet Jonah prefigures the three-day burial of Christ through his three-day stay in the belly of the whale.

All these holy forefathers together with our holy foremothers, Sarah, Rebecca, Ruth, Deborah and many, many more we commemorate today. All these are in fact our spiritual family, for they saw, long before we were born, the One Whom we confess, Christ our true God Who is Risen from the dead.

Holy Forefathers and Foremothers of Christ, pray to God for us!

Amen.

Tone 8, Troparion (Resurrection)

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

Tone 8, Troparion of the Temple (Midfeast of Pentecost)

O Savior at the Middle of the Feast, • fill my thirsting soul with the waters of piety, as Thou didst cry to all: • “If anyone thirst, let him come to Me and drink.” • O Christ God, Fountain of our life, glory to Thee.

Tone 2, Troparion (Forefathers)

Through faith Thou didst justify the Forefathers, • betrothing through them the Church of the gentiles. • These saints exult in glory, • for from their seed came forth a glorious fruit: • she who bore Thee without seed. • So by their prayers, O Christ God, have mercy on us.

Tone 4, Kontakion of the Temple (Midfeast of Pentecost)

Christ God, the Creator and Master of all, • cried to all in the midst of the feast of the law: “Come and draw the water of immortality.” • We fall before Thee and faithfully cry: • “Grant us Thy mercies for Thou art the Fountain of our life.”

Tone 6, Kontakion (Forefathers)

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 Thou art merciful and able to do as Thou dost will.”

Tone 4, Prokeimenon (Forefathers)

Blessed art Thou, O Lord God of our fathers, and praised and glorified is Thy Name forever. (*Song of the Three Holy Children, v. 3*)





Евангелие

Он же сказал ему: один человек сделал большой ужин и звал многих, и когда наступило время ужина, послал раба своего сказать званым: идите, ибо уже всё готово. И начали все, как бы сговорившись, извиняться. Первый сказал ему: я купил землю и мне нужно пойти посмотреть её; прошу тебя, извини меня. Другой сказал: я купил пять пар волов и иду испытать их; прошу тебя, извини меня. Третий сказал: я женился и потому не могу прийти. И, возвратившись, раб тот донёс о сем господину своему. Тогда, разгневавшись, хозяин дома сказал рабу своему: пойди скорее по улицам и переулкам города и приведи сюда нищих, увечных, хромых и слепых. И сказал раб: господин! исполнено, как приказал ты, и ещё есть место. Господин сказал рабу: пойди по дорогам и изгородям и убеди прийти, чтобы наполнился дом мой. Ибо сказываю вам, что никто из тех званых не вкусит моего ужина, ибо много званых, но мало избранных (Лк. 14, 16-24).



Митрополит Антоний Сурожский

Во имя Отца и Сына и Святого Духа.

Кончается сегодняшнее евангельское чтение очень страшными словами: *Много призванных, а мало избранных...* Господь, Который сотворил мир для того, чтобы поделиться с ним вечной, Божественной радостью, встречается, однако, в этом мире с холодным отказом; Он призывает всех – но избрание зависит от нас; Он всех сотворил любовью для радости и вечной жизни – но мы должны ответить любовью на любовь и войти в ту радость, которую нам предлагает Господь. И картина, которая нам дается в сегодняшнем Евангелии, такая простая и так точно описывает все состояния нашей души, все причины, по которым нам на Бога нет времени, к вечности нет интереса.

Приготовил Господь пир веры, пир вечности, пир любви, и посылает Он за теми, которых Он давно предупредил, что будет такой пир и

☞ чтобы были готовы к нему. Один отвечает: я купил клочок земли, надо мне его обозреть, надо мне им овладеть; ведь земля – моя родина; на земле я родился, на земле живу, в землю же лягу костью, как мне не позаботиться о том, чтобы хоть какой-то клочок этой земли был мой? Небо – Божие, а земля пусть будет моя... Разве мы не так поступаем, разве и мы не стараемся укорениться на земле так, чтобы уже ничто нас не поколебало, так обеспечить себя землей и на земле? И думаем, что вот-вот обеспечим себя; что придет время, когда все земное будет сделано, и тогда будет время подумать о Боге.

Но тут мы слышим и второй пример, который нам дает Господь: к другим званым послал Он Своих слуг, а те ответили: пять пар волов мы купили, надо нам их испытать, – у нас есть задание на земле, у нас есть работа, мы не можем оставаться без дела; мало принадлежать земле – надо принести плод, надо за собой оставить след. Нам некогда пировать в Царстве Божием, оно слишком рано приходит со своим призывом к вечной жизни, к созерцанию Бога, к радости взаимной любви, – надо на земле что-то еще закончить... А когда все будет сделано, когда останутся для Бога только жалкие остатки человеческого ума, тела, способностей, тогда пусть то, что останется от земли, Он Себе берет; но сейчас дело идет о земле – родной, своей, которая плод приносит, на которой надо оставить вечный след: как будто что-нибудь останется от нас через одно-другое десятилетие после нашей смерти!

И к третьим посылает Господь, и эти Ему отвечают: в нашу жизнь вошла земная любовь; я женился, – неужели мне отрываться от этой любви, чтобы вступить в царство другой любви?.. Да, небесная любовь просторней, глубже охватывает всех; но я не хочу этой всеобъемлющей любви, я хочу личной ласки, я хочу одного человека любить так, чтобы никто и ничто на земле не значило бы столько, сколько значит для меня этот человек. Мне недосуг теперь вступать в вечные чертоги: там любовь безграничная, всеобъемлющая, вечная, Божия, – а здесь любовь по масштабу моего человеческого сердца: оставь меня, Господи, насладиться моей земной любовью, и когда ничего больше не останется, тогда прими меня в чертоги Твоей любви.

И мы так поступаем: мы себе на земле находим труд такой неотложный, что для Божиего дела, для жизни с Богом времени нет. И мы такую любовь находим себе на земле, что до Божией любви нет дела. «Вот придет смерть – тогда успеем»: это все тот же ответ на Божию любовь. Христос говорит: *Приидите ко Мне, все труждающиеся и обремененные, и Я упокою вас...* Все дам, любовь дам: встретитесь вы, люди Божий, лицом к лицу, – не так, как на земле,

2 ☞ туманно друг друга видя, не понимая друг друга, недоумевая, раня один другого. Встанете в Царстве Божиим – и все будет прозрачно: и понимание ума, и ведение сердца, и стремление воли, и любовь: все будет, как хрусталь, ясно... А мы отвечаем: Нет, Господи, на это будет свое время: дай исчерпать землю, на которой мы живем... И черпаем, и живем, и кончается тем, что по слову Божию в Ветхом Завете, дав нам все, что она только могла дать, земля обратно берет все, что она сама дала и что Господь дал: *ты земля, и в землю отыдешь...* И тогда купленное поле оказывается могильным полем, тогда труд, который нас оторвал от Бога, от живых отношений с людьми, от живого отношения с Богом, рассеивается даже и в памяти людей; тогда земная любовь, которая казалась так велика, представляется нам, когда мы встанем в вечности, узкой тюремной кельей... Но ради всего этого мы сказали Богу: Нет! Не Тебя, Господи, – землю, труд, любовь земную хотим мы пережить до конца!

Мало избранных не потому, что Бог строго выбирает, не потому, что Он мало кого находит достойным Себя, а потому, что мало кто находит *Бога* достойным того, чтобы поступиться клочком земли, часом труда, мгновением ласки... *Много* призванных, – все мы призваны: кто же из нас отзовется? Достаточно на любовь ответить любовью, чтобы войти в пир вечности, в жизнь. Неужели мы не ответим на Божию любовь одним словом: *Люблю Тебя, Господи!*.. Аминь.

Аминь.



Святитель Николай Сербский (Велимирович)

Во имя Отца и Сына и Святого Духа.

Всю сию величественную и пророческую притчу Господь завершает словами: *ибо много званых, а мало избранных.* Это относится и к иудеям, и к христианам. Мало было избранных среди иудеев, мало их и среди христиан. Все мы, крещенные, позваны на царскую трапезу, но Единому Богу известно, кто суть Его избранные. Горе тому из нас, кому Царь Всевышний пред всеми ангелами и святыми скажет: *друг! как ты вошел сюда не в брачной одежде?* Какой стыд, и стыд бесполезный! Какой ужас, и ужас непоправимый! Какая гибель, и гибель безвозвратная! Но на самом деле сии слова говорит нам Господь и теперь, каждый раз, когда мы приступаем принять Святое Причастие и душою своею соединиться с Женихом Христом: *друг! как ты вошел сюда не в брачной одежде?* Прислушаемся сердцем своим и совестью своею, когда подходим ко Святой Чаше - и мы услышим этот вопрос и этот укор. Разве что сии слова Божии не влекут за собой плач

3 ☞ *и скрежет зубов во тьме внешней,* как будет тогда, когда Бог скажет нам их в последний раз. А кто из вас может поручиться, что Бог не сегодня говорит ему это последний раз в земной жизни? Кто может поручиться, что уже сею ночью его душа, одетая в грязную одежду греха, не окажется в блистательном собрании небесном вокруг царской трапезы? Ах, кто из смертных может знать, не является ли сей день судьбоносным для всей его вечности! Всего лишь несколько минут решили судьбу двух распятых разбойников. Эти несколько минут один из них не сумел использовать и отошел во тьму внешнюю; в то время как другой сии несколько минут благообразно использовал, покаялся, исповедал Сына Божия и помолился Ему о своем спасении: *помяни меня, Господи, когда приидешь в Царствие Твое!* И в то же мгновение старая одежда греха спала с его души, и душа его облеклась в блистающий брачный наряд. И покаявшийся разбойник с достоинством избранного сел в раю за царскую трапезу.

Не будем же и мы откладывать покаяние ни на единый час, ибо каждый следующий час может уже не застать нас среди живущих в мире сем. Примемся скорее мыть и чистить свою душу, хотя бы столько, сколько чистим и моем свое тело, которое не сегодня-завтра будет пищей червей. Очистимся покаянием и слезами, омоемся постом и молитвой и облечемся в одеяние, сотканное из чистоты и любви, украшенное всеми добрыми делами, наипаче делами прощения и милосердия. Сделаем то малое, чего ждет от нас Бог, - остальное Он сделает Сам. Когда дитя пожалуется матери на нечистоту своего тела, мать его быстро чистит, моет и переодевает. О, насколько милостивее Отец Небесный к чадам Своим чем любая мать! В действительности душа всякого человека настолько нечиста, что своими силами никогда не сможет очиститься и удостоиться присутствия Божия. Но пусть всякий человек увидит свою душевную нечистоту, пусть возненавидит ее от всего сердца, пусть сделает то малое, что от него требуется, и, самое главное, пусть возопит к Богу, чтобы Бог Своим огнем и Духом его очистил. А Бог стоит и ожидает таких воплей от Своих покаявшихся чад, держа в руках роскошнейшие ангельские одежды, всегда готовый очистить, омыть, укрепить, осветить, облагодухать и облачить всех, взывающих к Нему в покаянии. Всемиловитому Богу нашему честь и слава. Честь и слава Небесному Жениху души нашей, Господу Иисусу Христу, со Отцем и Святым Духом - Троице Единосущной и Нераздельной, ныне и присно, во все времена и во веки веков.

Аминь.



Holy youths, pray for us!



The Children's Word is a weekly bulletin for Orthodox Christian young people. Copyright 2024 Alexandra Houck. Email is [orthodoxchildrensword \(at\) gmail.com](mailto:orthodoxchildrensword@gmail.com). Find it each week at myocn.net.

The Children's Word

"Let the little children come to me, and do not forbid them, for to such is the Kingdom of Heaven." Mark 10:14

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A Ministry of the
Orthodox Christian Network



A full house

Do you have any friends or relatives who live far away from you? Do you visit sometimes or talk on the phone? Maybe you wish they lived closer to you so you could be together more!



In the Gospel reading today, we hear how our Lord also wants His friends to be with Him! We read how a man throws a big party, and He invites lots of people. The problem is that nobody comes to it! They all give excuses. They all say they are busy with something else. But the man still wants to have his party, so he invites even more people. He tells his servant, "Go out to the highways and hedges, and compel people to come in, that my house may be filled." The master (Who is really God) wants His friends to be close to Him. He wants His house to be filled!

So, just as we might miss our friends or family when they live far away from us, our loving Lord misses His children too. He wants us to help Him, too. We can be like the servant in the Gospel story today, inviting other people to be close to the Master too. Sometimes we can invite people with words. But we can always try to be good Christian examples so others will *want* to know more about our Lord. Remember, God wants *all* of His children to be close to Him!

WORD SEARCH

Can you find these words in the jumble?

Banquet
Daniel
Faith
Fire
Heaven
Invitation
Nebuchadnezzar
Salvation
Youths

P	V	M	T	K	W	S	H	N	V	N	N	G	M	E
T	V	G	B	E	H	X	E	K	L	E	O	F	M	Q
W	L	Z	P	T	U	V	Y	G	F	B	I	U	J	R
A	U	X	U	F	A	Q	P	M	N	U	T	G	A	B
P	Z	O	A	E	I	A	N	V	U	C	A	F	X	D
W	Y	I	H	M	I	L	N	A	A	H	V	M	M	H
T	T	T	L	N	R	J	S	U	B	A	L	L	Z	A
H	S	C	F	N	C	Z	M	L	M	D	A	F	R	E
N	O	I	T	A	T	I	V	N	I	N	S	Q	J	Z
N	D	R	V	F	P	G	L	Z	F	E	N	X	G	B
L	K	W	F	Q	I	F	X	H	L	Z	D	Z	C	J
A	S	H	S	V	T	R	V	W	G	Z	H	Z	M	V
R	L	V	B	B	P	T	E	J	H	A	I	I	G	V
H	O	P	X	W	S	K	N	M	T	R	P	J	H	I
R	I	F	P	D	A	N	I	E	L	F	V	X	Q	L

WHAT'S IN THE ICON?

Here is another icon of the three holy youths. You can see the angel cooling them.

Can you see King Nebuchadnezzar? He is ordering his servants to make the fire even hotter!



DANIEL AND THE 3 HOLY YOUTHS

FAITH, NO MATTER WHAT!



Have you ever traded something you had for something you wanted? Did you trade a toy that you had for a toy a friend had? You give something, and you get something.

Sometimes we might think we can trade something with God too. We might think that if we pray a lot, or we

do something for Him, God will always give us what we want. Maybe we think we can trade what *we* do for something that *God* does. But that's not how it works, is it? God is ready to help us, but He does what He wants, when He wants, and how He wants.

On Tuesday, we remember Daniel and the Holy Youths. Do you remember hearing about them during Holy Week? They are the boys who were supposed to bow down and worship the idol of the king. But they only worshipped God! Why should they worship the idol of the king? When they refused, they were thrown into the super-hot fire.

If you read the story from the Old Testament, you'll find that these boys never made a deal with God. They never said, "We'll pray, and you'll save us." They never told the king that God would save them from the fire. But they knew they only worshipped God. They had faith in God—no matter what!

We celebrate Daniel and youths on Tuesday, December 17th (OC: December 30th).