

# The Arena



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*"All who love the martyrs, raise up a  
divine and worthy hymn, honoring the  
most wise Katherine, for she  
preached Christ in the arena"*

*Kontakion to Saint Katherine*

The Newsletter of  
**SAINT KATHERINE THE GREAT**  
**MARTYR MISSION**  
**ORTHODOX CHURCH OF**  
**AMERICA**

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## PASTOR'S COLUMN

by Father John Strickland

At its meeting in October, the Parish Council again took notice of the recent drop in our monthly giving. As the financial scorecard posted in the parish hall just outside the kitchen indicates, our actual income has for four months now fallen below the pledged income we used in January to establish the annual budget. Although this is a sharp contrast to the very healthy monthly figures of most of the earlier part of the year (the month of May witnessed a nearly fifty percent jump over budget), it has resulted in difficulty meeting some of our financial obligations, particularly in our building fund. These are difficult economic times for many people, and some may find themselves forced to cut back on various expenses and financial commitments. In light of this situation, it was agreed that a brief statement about the system of financial stewardship our parish employs would be timely. It is also hoped that it will be informative to new members and others who have not made pledges.

As a parish Saint Katherine Mission exists for the salvation of her members and the world that surrounds them. This spiritual mission requires us to provide a sizeable and stable basis of financial support for the priest, the building we rent, the property we must one day purchase, the supplies we consume, and so forth.

We and other Orthodox parishes in our diocese that have experienced particularly strong growth have found that the most effective way of securing a sizeable and stable basis of support is through a system called pledging. We do not pass a weekly collection plate at the Divine Liturgy, nor do we raise money for our expenses through sales of items such as candles. We do not organize annual or seasonal bake sales or other such "fundraisers." Instead, we employ a much more predictable and efficient means of financial stewardship. In making a stewardship pledge, parishioners make a voluntary, confidential, and formal commitment to give to the needs of the parish over the course of a year. This enables the parish council to design a budget which, if approved by the parish at our annual assembly, is accurately grounded in the projected income for that year.

And yet pledging also fulfils another important function. As a rule, it tends to bless a parish with increased financial resources because giving tends to increase when planned in advance. It can then be placed within the context of a person's or family's entire range of financial commitments, presumably assuming a high priority among them. If not planned in advance and left rather to a decision of the moment (such as a collection plate offering during the Divine Liturgy), we can often give less than we would if we had established in advance and through prayerful reflection a disciplined rule of giving. This is rather like the way the Church guides us to establish a disciplined rule of prayer: She knows that if left to the moment, we would more often than not be inclined not to pray, or to pray very little, at a given time of the day. The same is generally true of fasting.

How much, then, should one pledge? This question can only be answered on a personal basis through prayer and perhaps with the counsel of other trusted members of the Church. It is true, however, that we as Christians have some very high standards in front of us (which may be why our instinct is often to avoid discussing the question altogether). The Bible is the most important source of them.

There is the well-known minimum standard of ten percent of one's income issued in the Old Testament. Called tithing, it required the people of God to give back the first and best ten percent of their livelihood to God. When the Israelites failed to do this, they were chastised by God through prophets such as Malachi (Mal. 3:6-12). What is more, tithing was an Old Testament prefiguration of the Christian's relationship to Jesus Christ, as indicated by the fact that Abraham, identified by Saint Paul as a type of the faithful believer in Christ (Rom. 4), offered a tithe to Melchizedek, whom Paul identifies as a type of Christ himself (Heb. 7).

And then there is the example of the New Testament. There, ten percent gives way to everything. The first Christians, we are told in Acts, gave all of their possessions to the needs of the Church (Acts 4:32-5:11).

But neither the Old Testament minimum nor the New Testament maximum are laws that we are somehow obligated to follow. Our giving must be done freely, and with a conviction that giving to the needs of the Church initiates us more fully into the life of God himself. It must be done with joy, as God himself surely experienced joy in the creation of the world that sustains us. And it must be done with sacrifice, the way the Son of God emptied himself and died on the Cross for the sake of the world. The biblical standard of giving, whether it be financial or otherwise, is in fact sacramental. It identifies the offering as belonging properly to God, and the human act of giving it back to God enables the believer to participate in the divine giving of God, which itself brings about the salvation of the world. Is this not

beautifully revealed during the Divine Liturgy when the priest or deacon raises the bread and the wine over the Altar and proclaims, "Thine own of thine own we offer unto thee, on behalf of all, and for all"?

## **1** PARISH AND LOCAL EVENTS

### CALENDAR HIGHLIGHTS:

- Nov. 5** Bible Study @ 7pm
- Nov. 7** Catechesis (The Divine Liturgy) @ 4pm
- Nov. 12** Studies in Orthodoxy @ 7pm
- Nov. 15** Beginning of Nativity Fast  
Charity Committee meeting after Liturgy
- Nov. 18** Parish Council meeting @ 7pm
- Nov. 19** Bible Study @ 7pm
- Nov. 20** Eve of Entrance: Great Vespers @ 7pm
- Nov. 21** ENTRANCE OF THEOTOKOS  
No Divine Liturgy at Saint Katherine  
Catechesis (The Liturgical Year) @ 4pm  
**Resurrectional Vigil with Bishop Benjamin @ 6pm**
- Nov. 22** Greeting of Bishop Benjamin @ 9am  
Hierarchical Vesting and Tonsuring of Martin Rebne as Reader  
@ 9:15am  
Hierarchical Divine Liturgy @ 9:30am  
Celebration lunch for upcoming parish altar feast with Bp.  
Benjamin follows
- Nov. 23** Eve of Saint Katherine: Festal Vigil @ 7pm
- Nov. 24** Parish Altar Feast: Holy Great Martyr Katherine  
Divine Liturgy with Cross Procession @ 9am
- Nov. 26** Thanksgiving Day: Moleben of Thanksgiving @ 10am  
No Studies in Orthodoxy
- Nov. 29** Great Vespers for Saint Andrew in Arlington
- Nov. 30** Orthros (8:30) and Divine Liturgy (9:30) at Saint Andrew Church  
in Arlington

## CATECHETICAL CHALLENGES (Our Catechumens can answer them. Can you?)

1. From what tree in Paradise were Adam and Eve separated by their expulsion and the power of the angel with the flaming sword?
2. Where in the Bible are a saint's relics said to work miracles?
3. Without glancing in the direction of the choir area (if you are reading this during coffee fellowship), can you say:
  - a) who the six saints depicted on the icons there are, and
  - b) what they share in common?

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Dear parishioners,

We have embarked on a serious effort to acquire property for use as a holy place of worship for our parish, perhaps permanently and certainly for many years. We, as members of the parish, can contribute to this task in no better way than to fervently pray to our Lord Jesus Christ that He bestow his favor and guidance upon us, and to ask the Lady Theotokos and all the Saints to intercede for us that we may succeed in doing the will of God.

Fr. Mancantelli of Billings, Montana was kind enough to recommend this prayer rule. If possible, please add it to your daily rule of prayer and bring it to the attention of others who might be willing to support us in this manner. Regardless of the outcome of the property search, this prayer will help us all fulfill our primary mission of preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ in love to the world, beginning here on the East Side.

Glenn Rebne (Property Search Committee)

### **Prayer for Repentance and Church Growth**

Please offer this prayer each morning at 10 AM (or as close to that hour as you can):

Lord Jesus Christ our God, Thou didst promise that when two or three are gathered together in Thy name, Thou Thyself wouldst be in their midst. We call out to Thee with one voice, one mind and one heart, asking for the communion of Thy Most Holy Spirit, a converted heart which burns with love for God and our neighbor, and the growth of our parish.

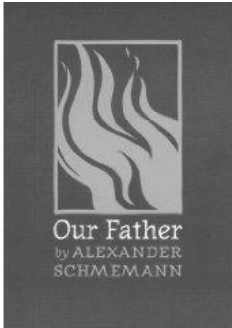
Give us the grace to help our parish grow to establish Thy peace and righteousness upon the earth. Show us when and how to speak to, to pray, and to love Thy lost sheep, and bring them into the safety of Thy fold. We ask this through the prayers of our Most Pure Lady, the Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary, and the Holy Great-martyr Katherine, patroness and protector of our holy parish.

For Thou, O Christ our God, art worthy to receive power, riches, wisdom, strength, honor, glory and blessing; and we praise Thee, together with Thy Father, Who is from everlasting, and Thy Most Holy, Good, and Life-giving Spirit, now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.

## READINGS AND RAMBLINGS

\*\*\*This is a new column designed to present your contributions. As the title suggests, this column will contain everything from suggested reading and book reviews to topics of personal and communal interest. In short, this column is what we, the parishioners of St. Katherine Mission, want it to be. **Please email submissions to Emily Lorelli – ekslorelli@gmail.com.**\*\*\*

The following are several book reviews written by members of St. Katherine Mission. Any or all of these books would be excellent titles for an Advent reading list.



### **Our Father by Alexander Schmemmann**

Review by JoAnn Grambush

Our Thursday night Bible Study group has been reading *Our Father* by Fr Alexander Schmemmann. Around the table we read and reflect on the familiar phrases of the Lord's Prayer. The book is actually compiled from a series of radio broadcasts which Fr Schmemmann made to listeners in the Soviet Union. The back of the book states that through this familiar prayer we are given a map for seeing anew the purpose and measure of our whole life.

Our Bible Study reading of the book, chapter by chapter, has opened up conversation and brought us to the scriptures to appreciate the individual phrases of the prayer. The fullness of the holy calling to pray this prayer is laid before you in the words of Fr Schmemmann. He presents the beauty, the high calling, the elevation of our spirits and our very lives that occurs when we contemplate each petition in its fullness.

When we pray, "Our Father", we remember the illustrations Fr Schmemmann offers in his reflections. On page 86, he reviews the previous chapters: "We saw that behind each petition, there lies a world of spiritual realities. Spiritual connections which regularly escape our attention, which have vanished in the turmoil of our daily lives. From this point of view, the Lord's Prayer is more than a prayer, it is an epiphany and revelation of the spiritual world for which we are created.

Fr Schmemmann concludes:

"While we keep repeating the Lord's prayer, our life is opened toward the kingdom, is filled with power and shines with glory in the face of which darkness, hatred and evil lie powerless."

As you read and reflect on *Our Father*, by Fr Schmemmann, you will come to appreciate the privilege to pray it that is given to us by our Lord; and you will be in awe of the potential given to us through its transforming work on us. Glory to Jesus Christ!



## **Victory in the Unseen Warfare**

**by Jack N. Sparks**

Review by Diana Simmons

“In *Victory in the Unseen Warfare*, Father Jack N. Sparks has drawn upon several versions of a classic sixteenth-century treatise, *Spiritual Combat*, originally written to guide monks in their labors to attain union with God. Though Western in origin, the profound spiritual insights of *Spiritual Combat* were recognized by Eastern writers

such as Nicodemus of the Holy Mountain and Saint Theophan the Recluse, who subsequently edited and revised it in accordance with traditional Orthodox beliefs. In one form or another, this work has been revered as a classic on the spiritual warfare for over four hundred years.

Father Sparks has selected passages from this timeless work, reorganized the material, and recast it in contemporary language, all with the lay reader in mind. The result is a profound but highly practical resource for those who seek to strive with all their might against the enemies of our souls- the world, the flesh, and the devil.”

The preface says this: “A first reading of this volume can be puzzling. In one sense, it starts from the beginning, as if the reader were just beginning to inquire about following God. However, the content is so deep that any Christian, at any point in life, can receive help from starting at the beginning. And in another sense, this book is only for those who have become so serious about knowing God that everything else pales in comparison.” The original work was developed within a monastic context and so is a distillation of ascetic spiritual experience. This adaptation aims to help lay Christians in developing their life with God.

This little book has become a great friend. My copy is worn and marked, especially chapter 7, *Establishing and Preserving Peace of Heart*, and chapter 9, *Inner Peace Withdraws*. I have picked it up in times of confusion or distress and it never fails to show me the Way.



## **Surprised by Christ: My Journey from Judaism to Orthodox Christianity**

**by Father James Bernstein**

Review by Emily Lorelli

As the title of Father Bernstein's book suggests, its general outline is autobiographical – delineating his personal journey to the Orthodox Church and the travels, endeavors, and relationships therein. However, as His Eminence, Metropolitan Jonah writes in the Foreword, “More than an autobiography ... Fr. James gives us an outline of his

intellectual and spiritual development” (10), beginning with his desire to know God, his acceptance of Christ as the Messiah prophesied in the Old Testament, and his “movement from evangelicalism ... to Orthodox Christianity” (10). As he outlines the intellectual process of his conversion, Fr. James examines Old and

New Testament scripture in such a way as to be helpful to anyone considering Orthodox Christianity. It was also illuminating to me personally, as I am not as familiar with Old Testament scripture and have always just accepted the church's teaching that Christ is the fulfillment of the scriptures.

The latter part of the book, which mainly addresses Fr. James's discovery of and conversion to Orthodox Christianity, "deals with the underlying presuppositions of the cultural Christianity which is common to almost all Americans ... these include the ideas of original sin, the atonement, and the concepts of salvation, as well as the nature of hell and divine punishment," showing that "Orthodox Christianity has a vision of God and salvation radically different, and far more healthy, than the culturally conditioned presuppositions of American popular religion" (10-11). Fr. James's theological realizations are readily understandable by most anyone – i.e. it doesn't read like a philosophy textbook. In fact, since the theology is presented "primarily in terms of personal realizations ... this book presents a strong challenge to us to examine our own theological and spiritual assumptions" (11). I would recommend this book to literally anyone regardless of where they are on their personal spiritual journey – whether they are questioning the existence of God or wanting a spiritually edifying read for the Advent season.



## THE LIVES OF THE SAINTS –

### NOVEMBER 5: The Martyrs Galacteon and his wife Epistime at Emesa

The Martyrs Galacteon and his wife Epistime at Emesa

There was a rich and distinguished couple named Kletophon and Leukippe, who lived in the Syrian city of Emesa, and for a long time they were childless.

They gave much gold to the pagan priests, but still they remained childless.

The city of Emesa was governed by a Syrian named Secundus, put there by the Roman Caesars. He was a merciless and zealous persecutor of Christians, and to intimidate them he ordered that the instruments of torture be displayed on the streets. The slightest suspicion of belonging to "the sect of the Galilean" (as thus Christians were called by the pagans), was enough to get a man arrested and handed over for torture. In spite of this, many Christians voluntarily surrendered themselves into the hands of the executioners, in their desire to suffer for Christ.

A certain old man by the name of Onuphrius, who concealed his monastic and priestly dignity beneath his beggar's rags. He walked from house to house in Emesa, begging alms. At the same time, whenever he saw the possibility of turning people away from the pagan error, he preached about Christ.

Once, he came to the magnificent house of Leukippe. Accepting alms from her, he sensed that the woman was in sorrow, and he asked what was the cause of

this sadness. She told the Elder about her familial misfortune. In consoling her, Onuphrius began to tell her about the one true God, about His omnipotence and mercy, and how He always grants the prayer of those turning to Him with faith. Hope filled the soul of Leukippe. She believed and accepted Holy Baptism. Soon after this it was revealed to her in a dream that she would give birth to a son, who would be a true follower of Christ. At first, Leukippe concealed her delight from her husband, but after the infant was born, she revealed the secret to her husband and also persuaded him to be baptized.

They named the baby Galacteon and his parents raised him in the Christian Faith and provided him a fine education. He could make an illustrious career for himself, but Galacteon sought rather an unsullied monastic life in solitude and prayer.

When Galacteon turned twenty-four, his father resolved to marry him off and they found him a bride, a beautiful and illustrious girl by the name of Epistime. The son did not oppose the will of his father, but by the will of God, the wedding was postponed for a time. Visiting his betrothed, Galacteon gradually revealed his faith to her. Eventually, he converted her to Christ and he secretly baptized her himself.

Besides Epistime he baptized also one of her servants, Eutolmius. The newly-illuminated decided on the initiative of Galacteon, to devote themselves to the monastic life. Leaving the city, they hid themselves away on Mount Publion, where there were two monasteries, one for men and the other for women. The new monastics had to take with them all the necessities for physical toil, since the inhabitants of both monasteries were both old and infirm.

For several years the monastics struggled in work, fasting and prayer. Once, Epistime had a vision in her sleep: she and Galacteon stood in a wondrous palace before a radiant King, and the King bestowed golden crowns on them. This was a prefiguring of their impending martyrdom.

The pagans became aware of the existence of the monasteries, and a military detachment was sent to apprehend their inhabitants. But the monks and the nuns succeeded in hiding themselves in the hills. Galacteon, however, had no desire to flee and so he remained in his cell, reading Holy Scripture. When Epistime saw that the soldiers were leading Galacteon away in chains, she began to implore the Abbess to permit her to go also, since she wanted to accept torture for Christ together with her fiancé and teacher. The Abbess tearfully blessed Epistime to do so.

The saints endured terrible torments, while supplicating and glorifying Christ. Their hands and legs were cut off, their tongues were cut out, and then they were beheaded.

Eutolmius, the former servant of Epistime, and who had become her brother in Christ and fellow ascetic in monastic struggles, secretly buried the bodies of the holy martyrs. He later wrote an account of their virtuous life and their glorious martyrdom, for his contemporaries and for posterity.



### Love Without Limits (2)

Written by the Very Rev. John Breck

Archimandrite Lev Gillet, who signed many of his books "A Monk of the Eastern Church," was one of the great Orthodox spiritual guides of the last century. His biography, written by his longtime friend Mme. Elisabeth Behr-Sigel, has been translated into English and offers invaluable insight into the life of Fr Lev, as well as of the circumstances surrounding the growth of Orthodox Christianity in Western Europe, especially following the Russian Revolution.

In 1990, St. Vladimir's Seminary published two essays of Fr Lev in a volume titled **Serve the Lord With Gladness**. The first, "Our Life in the Liturgy," is a simple and highly accessible introduction to the Orthodox Divine Liturgy or Eucharistic service. The second, "Be My Priest," is a profound meditation on the significance of the priesthood, which appeals to both ordained clergy and others who make up the "universal priesthood" of baptized believers.

In this series of webpage columns dedicated to "Life in Christ," we will be offering occasional translations of chapters from another of Fr Lev's books, **Amour Sans Limites (Love Without Limits)**, published in 1971 by "Éditions de Chevetogne," a Roman Catholic monastery in Belgium (where the monks celebrate both Western and Byzantine rites). It is difficult to render Fr Lev's lyrical French into English, but we hope that these efforts will provide readers with something of the spiritual richness and profound theological insight that characterized this humble monk, who was truly a modern Father of the Church.

#### "A New Creation"

"My child, do not expect some new revelation," says the Lord of Love. "I will speak to you only of those things that I have spoken from the beginning.

"What might be new in what I say is the special attention I shall give to certain aspects of eternal Truth.

"The time is coming when a deepening of Love will make an irresistible appeal to the faith of a great many people. They will discover Love, the Lord of Love, the universal Love that knows no limits. This will be no new message, no new revelation. Yet those who open themselves to this vision with all their heart will help me to create a new Heaven and a new Earth, an end toward which I am laboring constantly.

"Thereby the discovery of Love, our reception within ourselves of infinite Love, will itself be a New Creation. At every moment, Love longs to create among you an ever greater abundance of love."

#### "This Great Vision"

"Fire burst forth from the burning bush, yet the bush was not destroyed. Draw near to the Burning Bush, my child. Reflect on this great vision, and why the bush burned and still was not consumed.

“The fire that burns the bush without destroying it is a fire nourished by nothing apart from itself. It subsists alone, by itself. And of itself it spreads abroad in infinite growth. This fire does not destroy the wood of the bush. Rather, it purifies the wood. It eliminates everything in the wood that is merely brambles and thorns. Yet it does not deform the bush. It respects its original structure, even while it eliminates its superfluous growth. It renews without killing. It transforms the wood itself into fire, a lasting fire.

“Surely, according to the most simple, the most elementary interpretation, you can behold in the Burning Bush the expression of divine protection, which sustains your existence in the face of every burning pain and suffering. There, my child, you can find the assurance of a supreme Compassion, a preserving Mercy. There you can see as well the sign of a divine Purification: one painful for you to endure, yet one that sets you free.

“The Burning Bush, however, has a still deeper meaning. It bears a Revelation of your Lord and God Himself.

“The Burning Bush is an expression of the divine nature. In the flame of the bush you can have a glimpse of Who I am. As the Scripture declares, your Lord, the Lord of Love, is a consuming fire!

“Like the flame of the Bush, I am Love that gives endlessly of itself. I am that generosity that knows no bounds. No one can say of my Love: it extends to this point, and no further.

“I am that Love that always tends to incorporate and assimilate every element of human existence it encounters (indeed, I am the very Source of those elements). Just as the fire burns without consuming the wood of the bush, I never destroy the persons I have created. I only wish to make disappear whatever there is within a person that conflicts with the essence of Love.

“I take for myself and make it my own. I transform and I transfigure. I bestow life. I transpose human life on to a higher plane.

“He who loves unites himself to those whom he loves. I unite myself to you, my beloved. Nevertheless, there can be no confusion between myself, who am Love, and you, who receive that Love.

“Can you now behold this Great Vision? Do you see the flame that no one lights, the flame that leaps forth from my very Heart, the flame which is my very Being? Do you see the divine Fire that spreads out across the world? The entire universe is the Burning Bush!”

**The Symbol of Faith: Incarnation**

... and He was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary and became man.

The divine Son of God was born as a man from the Virgin Mary by the power of the Holy Spirit (*Mt 1; Lk 1*). The Church teaches that the virgin birth is the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy (*Isa 7:14*), and that it is as well the fulfillment of the longings of all men for salvation which are found in all religions and philosophies in human history. Only God can save the world. Man alone cannot do it because it is man himself who must be saved. Therefore, according to Orthodox doctrine, the virgin birth is necessary not at all because of a false idolization of virginity as such or because of a sinful repulsion to normal human sexuality. Nor is it necessary as some would contend to give "added weight" to the moral teachings of Jesus. The virgin birth is understood as a necessity because the one who is born must not be merely a man like all others needing salvation. The Saviour of the world cannot merely be one of the race of Adam born of the flesh like all of the others. He must be "not of this world" in order to save the world.

Jesus is born from the Virgin Mary because he is the divine Son of God, the Saviour of the world. It is the formal teaching of the Orthodox Church that Jesus is not a "mere man" like all other men. He is indeed a real man, a whole and perfectly complete man with a human mind, soul and body. But he is the man which the Son and Word of God has become. Thus, the Church formally confesses that Mary should properly be called **Theotokos**, which means literally "the one who gives birth to God." For the one born of Mary is, as the Orthodox Church sings at Christmas: "... he who from all eternity is God."

*Today the Virgin gives birth to the Transcendent One, and the earth offers a cave to the Unapproachable One! Angels, with shepherds, glorify Him! The wise men journey with the star! Since for our sake the eternal God was born as a little child! (Kontakion of the Nativity)*

Jesus of Nazareth is God, or, more accurately, the divine Son of God in human flesh. He is a true man in every way. He was born. He grew up in obedience to his parents. He increased in wisdom and stature (*Lk 2:51-52*). He had a family life with "brethren" (*Mk 2:31-34*), who according to Orthodox doctrine were not children born of Mary who is confessed as "ever-virgin", but were either cousins or children of Joseph.

As a man Jesus experienced all normal and natural human experiences such as growth and development, ignorance and learning, hunger, thirst, fatigue, sorrow, pain, and disappointment. He also knew human temptation, suffering, and death. He took these things upon himself "for us men and for our salvation."

*Since, therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same nature, that through death he might destroy him who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong bondage. For surely it was not with angels that he is concerned but with the descendants of Abraham. Therefore he had to be made like his brethren in every respect*

... to make expiation for the sins of the people. For because he himself has suffered and been tempted, he is able to help those who are tempted (Heb 2:9-18).

Christ has entered the world becoming like all men in all things except sin.

*He committed no sin; no guile was found on his lips. When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten; but he trusted to him [God the Father] who judges justly (1 Pet 2:22; Heb 4:15).*

Jesus was tempted, but he did not sin. He was perfect in every way, absolutely obedient to God the Father; speaking His words, doing His works, and accomplishing His will. As a man, Jesus fulfilled his role perfectly as the Perfect Man, the new and final Adam. He did all things that man fails to do, being in everything the most perfect human response to the divine initiative of God toward creation. In this sense, the Son of God as man "recapitulated" the life of Adam, i.e., the entire human race, bringing man and his world back to God the Father and allowing for a new beginning of life free from the power of sin, the devil, and death.

As the Saviour-Messiah, Christ fulfilled as well all of the prophecies and expectations of the Old Testament, fulfilling and crowning in final and absolute perfection all that was begun in Israel for human and cosmic salvation. Thus, Christ is the fulfillment of the promise to Abraham, the completion of the Law of Moses, the fulfillment of the prophets and Himself the Final Prophet, the King and the Teacher, the one Great High Priest of Salvation and the Perfect Sacrificial Victim, the New Passover and the Bestower of the Holy Spirit upon all creation.

It is in this role as Messiah-King of Israel and Saviour of the world that Christ insisted upon His identity with God the Father and called Himself the Way, the Truth, and the Life: the Resurrection and the Life, the Light of the World, the Bread of Life, the Door to the Sheepfold, the Good Shepherd, the Heavenly Son of Man, the Son of God, and God Himself, the **I AM (Gospel of St. John)**.

## The Trisagion by Megan Martha

Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal, have mercy on us.

The Trisagion, or "Thrice-holy" hymn, is an imitation of the heavenly host. Isaiah in the Old Testament and John the Theologian in the New tell us that the angels stand before the throne of God and cry ceaselessly "Holy, holy holy!" We who "mystically represent the cherubim" on earth join them when we sing the Trisagion.

John of Damascus relates a dramatic story regarding the origins of this hymn. When Proclus was Archbishop of Constantinople (434 - 446), an earthquake struck the city. While the people were praying for deliverance, a boy was caught up into the third heaven like St. Paul and learned the Trisagion from the angels. The boy returned to earth with the message that the people should sing it to escape harm. They did, the earthquake ceased, and the news must have spread rapidly throughout the Orthodox world - the Fathers sang it at the conclusion of the Fourth Ecumenical Council in Chalcedon in 451.

Only a few decades later the Trisagion became a source of controversy when the heretical bishop Peter the Fuller added a clause to make it read "Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal, *who was crucified for us*, have mercy on us." In effect, Peter had changed the Trisagion from a hymn to the Trinity into a hymn for Christ alone. The debate between Peter's followers and the Orthodox on this issue eventually led to a riot in Constantinople in 513. The question was never resolved; the Orthodox Church still uses the original form of the Trisagion, and some churches that never accepted the Fourth Ecumenical Council still use Peter's version.

Since I am no theologian, I will leave the last word to John of Damascus, that great defender of all liturgical arts:

"It is, therefore, a matter for laughter and ridicule that this Thrice-Holy Hymn taught us by the angels, and confirmed by the averting of calamity, ratified and established by so great an assembly of the holy Fathers, and sung first by the Seraphim as a declaration of the three substances of the Godhead should be mangled and forsooth emended to suit the view of the stupid Fuller as though he were higher than the Seraphim. ... But we say it thus, though demons should rend us in pieces: "Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal, have mercy on us."

## November Troparia and Kontakia

November 1: Holy Unmercenaries and Wonderworkers, Cosmos and Damian

### **Troparion - Tone 8**

Holy unmercenaries and wonderworkers, Cosmas and Damian, heal our infirmities.

Freely you have received; freely you give to us.

### **Kontakion - Tone 2**

Having received the grace of healing, you grant healing to those in need.

Glorious wonder workers and healers, Cosmas and Damian, visit us and put down the insolence of our enemies, and bring healing to the world through your miracles.

November 8: Synaxis of the Archangel Michael and the Other Bodiless Powers

### **Troparion - Tone 4**

Commanders of the heavenly hosts, we who are unworthy beseech you,

by your prayers encompass us beneath the wings of your immaterial glory, and faithfully preserve us who fall down and cry to you:

"Deliver us from all harm, for you are the commanders of the powers on high!"

### **Kontakion - Tone 2**

Commanders of God's armies and ministers of the divine glory, princes of the bodiless angels and guides of mankind, ask for what is good for us, and for great mercy, supreme commanders of the Bodiless Hosts.

November 15: Martyr and Confessor Gurias of Edessa

### **Troparion - Tone 5**

You have granted us the miracles of Your holy martyrs

As a stronghold and protection:

Samonas, Gurias, and Habib!

Strengthen our land in goodness through their prayers, O Christ God,

For You alone are merciful and the lover of mankind!

### **Kontakion - Tone 2**

You received a special grace from on high,

Becoming the protectors of those threatened with danger:

O wise Gurias, and Samonas, you are worthy of all praise,

Saving a handmaid of God from cruel death, O holy ones!

Indeed you are the glory of Edessa, and the joy of the Universe!

November 21: Entry of the Most Holy Mother of God into the Temple

### **Troparion - Tone 4**

Today with the most revered of all cities

we fittingly celebrate your honored translation to heaven,

Father of Fathers, wise Proclus.

**Kontakion - Tone 4**

The most pure Temple of the Savior;  
the precious Chamber and Virgin;  
the sacred Treasure of the glory of God,  
is presented today to the house of the Lord.  
She brings with her the grace of the Spirit,  
therefore, the angels of God praise her:  
"Truly this woman is the abode of heaven."

**November 24: Greatmartyr Catherine of Alexandria****Troparion - Tone 4**

By your virtues as by rays of the sun you enlightened the unbelieving philosophers,  
and like the most bright moon you drove away the darkness of disbelief from those  
walking in the night;  
you convinced the queen, and also chastised the tyrant,  
God-summoned bride, blessed Catherine.  
You hastened with desire to the heavenly bridal chamber of the fairest fairest  
Bride-groom Christ,  
and you were crowned by Him with a royal crown;  
standing before Him with the angels, pray for us who keep your most sacred  
memory.

**Kontakion - Tone 2**

Let all of us who love to honor the martyrs  
form a great choir in praise of the most wise Catherine,  
for she preached Christ and trampled the serpent,  
despising the knowledge of the orators!

**November 29: Martyr Paramon in Bithynia****Troparion - Tone 4**

Your holy martyrs Paramon and Philumenus and those with them, O Lord,  
through their sufferings have received incorruptible crowns from You, our God.  
For having Your strength, they laid low their adversaries,  
and shattered the powerless boldness of demons.  
Through their intercessions, save our souls!

**Kontakion - Tone 4**

Urged on by the commandments of God,  
with patience, you cleansed your souls from all defilement.  
You reached perfection as spiritual athletes;  
you renounced sacrifice to idols.  
Imitating Christ, you were slain with a spear,  
most blessed Paramon and Philumenus.  
Always fervently intercede with Christ on behalf of the world.

## PARISHIONERS' NAME DAYS – NOVEMBER

**November 8:** Mike Adams, Mihai Bibireata, Misha Dickenson (Archangel Michael)

**November 12:** Neil Cutshall (Venerable Nilus)

**November 17:** Lance Kirmeyer (St. Gregory the Wonderworker of Neocaesarea)

**November 24:** Ekaterina Beaty, Katya Knowlton, Katherine Strickland, Ekaterina Dickenson (St. Katherine the Great Martyr)

**November 27:** Dean Kinard

## PRAYER REQUESTS

Note: If you wish to have someone included on our parish prayer list for remembrance during the divine services, please notify Fr. John before the end of the month. This list will in most cases be cleared at the beginning of each month.

Please include the following people, both Orthodox and non-Orthodox, in whatever prayers you can offer. Each of them is in special need this month for our common intercessions before God.

### Living

Patricia  
Flore  
Allan Simeon  
Deborah Maria  
James Demetrius  
Bp. Nikolai  
Robert Gregory  
Eugenia  
Bistra  
Sarah  
Allan  
Antonio  
Kira  
Greg  
Louise  
Ted  
Erin

### Departed

ND Charles

Catechetical Challenge Answers:

1. Life (Gen. 3:24)
2. IV Kingdoms 13:20-21 (according to the Septuagint name for the book; it is called II Kings according to most English editions)
- 3a. Ephrem the Syrian, Romanos the Melodist, Prophet David, Andrew of Crete, John of Damascus, and Cosmos
- 3b. A love of church singing (they are all hymnographers)