



# ALL-MERCIFUL SAVIOR MISSION NEWSLETTER

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## 24<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAY OF PENTECOST, DEC. 4, 2005

civil date / church date



## THIS WEEK'S CALENDAR

<b>Dec. 4 / Nov. 21</b>	<b>SUNDAY</b>	24th of Pentecost. Tone 7. <i>Fast, FOW</i> .*	ENTRY OF THE THEOTOKOS. <b>Service 10 a.m.</b>
Dec. 5 / Nov. 22	Monday	<i>Fast, FOW</i> *	St. Onesimus, bishop, disciple of St. Paul.
Dec. 6 / Nov. 23	Tuesday	<i>Fast, FOW</i> *	St. Gregory of Agrigentum, bishop.
Dec. 7 / Nov. 24	Wednesday	<i>Fast</i>	St. Katherine the Great-martyr of Alexandria.
Dec. 8 / Nov. 25	Thursday	<i>Fast, FOW</i> *	St. Clement, pope of Rome, martyr.
Dec. 9 / Nov. 26	Friday	<i>Fast</i>	St. Innocent, bishop of Irkutsk, apostle to Alaska.
Dec. 10 / Nov. 27	Saturday	<i>Fast, FOW</i> *	St. James, great-martyr of Persia. <b>Vigil 6:30 p.m.</b>

\* *Fast, OW* means that oil and wine are allowed that day. \**Fast, FOW* means fish is also allowed that day.

## PROLOGUE FOR NOV. 21

**Entry into the Temple of the Most-Holy Theotokos:** When the Most-holy Virgin Mary reached the age of three, her holy parents Joachim and Anna took her from Nazareth to Jerusalem to dedicate her to the service of God according to their earlier promise. It was a three-day journey from Nazareth to Jerusalem but, traveling to do a God-pleasing work, this journey was not difficult for them. Many kinsmen of Joachim and Anna gathered in Jerusalem to take part in this event, at which the invisible angels of God were also present. Leading the procession into the Temple were virgins with lighted tapers in their hands, then the Most-holy Virgin, led on one side by her father and on the other side by her mother. The virgin was clad in vesture of royal magnificence and adornments as was befitting the "King's daughter, the Bride of God" (Psalm 45:13-15). Following them were many kinsmen and friends, all with lighted tapers. Fifteen steps led up to the Temple. Joachim and Anna lifted the Virgin onto the first step, then she ran quickly to the top herself, where she was met by the High Priest Zacharias, who was to be the father of St. John the Forerunner. Taking her by the hand, he led her not only into the Temple, but into the "Holy of Holies," the holiest of holy places, into which no one but the high priest ever entered, and only once each year, at that. St. Theophylact of Ohrid says that Zacharias "was outside himself and possessed by God" when he led the Virgin into the holiest place in the Temple, beyond the second curtain-otherwise, his action could not be explained. Mary's parents then offered sacrifice to God according to the Law, received the priest's blessing and returned home. The Most-holy Virgin remained in the Temple and dwelt there for nine full years. While her parents were alive, they visited her often, especially Righteous Anna. When God called her parents from this world, the Most-holy Virgin was left an orphan and did not wish to leave the Temple until death or to enter into marriage. As that would have been against the Law and custom of Israel, she was given to St. Joseph, her kinsman in Nazareth, after reaching the age of twelve. Under the acceptable role of one betrothed, she could live in virginity and thus fulfill her desire and formally satisfy the Law, for it was then unknown in Israel for maidens to vow virginity to the end of their lives. The Most-holy Virgin Mary was the first of such life-vowed virgins, of the thousands and thousands of virgin men and women who would follow her in the Church of Christ.

**Hymn of Praise:** Saints Joachim and Anna

The parents of the Holy Virgin  
 Lead her to the holy Temple,  
 And according to their promise  
 They give her to the Lord.  
 They lead the Temple to the  
 Temple,  
 While angels chant,

And chant with joy  
 To the young Virgin in purest attire.

The virgins accompany our Virgin,  
 With hymns and tapers;  
 Zacharias leads her  
 To the Holy of Holies;  
 And into the Holy Place he takes her,

Where the awesome mystery is hidden.

Where the Ark of the Covenant is,  
 Where the golden lampstand is,  
 Where the staff and the manna are,  
 Into the guarding place of all mysteries;  
 There the pure Virgin is led-  
 The Mystical Ark of the Living Christ.

**Reflection:** Submit yourself to the will of God and do not pry too closely into God's judgments, for you can lose your mind. The judgments of God are innumerable and unfathomable. A monk in the wilderness, imagining that he had attained perfection, prayed to God that He would reveal to him His various judgments in the lives of men. God put the thought in his mind to go to a distant place to inquire of a spiritual elder concerning this. However, while the monk was on his way, an angel of God in the form of an ordinary man joined him, saying that he too wanted to go to that elder. Thus traveling together, they came upon the house of a God-fearing man, who treated them well, giving them to eat from a silver platter. When they had eaten, the angel took the platter and threw it into the sea. The monk found this both amazing and unjust, but he remained silent. The second day they came upon the house of another hospitable man who cordially received and treated them as kinsmen. Before leaving, that man brought out his only son for the travelers to bless. The angel of God then took the child by the throat and strangled him. The monk was greatly angered and asked the angel who he was, and why he had committed such misdeeds. The angel meekly replied to him: "The first man was pleasing to God in all things and had nothing in his house that was attained by injustice except that silver platter. By God's judgment, I threw that stolen platter away, so that the man would be righteous before God in all things. The other man was pleasing to God and had nothing in his house that would bring down the wrath of God except his son, who had he matured would have become a great criminal and a demonic vessel. Therefore, by God's judgment, I strangled that child in time to save his soul, for the sake of his father's goodness, and to save the father from many miseries. Behold, such are the mysteries and the unfathomable judgments of God. And you, elder, should return to your cell and not strive vainly by inquiring into that which is in the authority of the One God."

**Homily on the faithful as one body and one spirit** ...*There is one body and one spirit (Ephesians 4:4).*

The Holy Apostle counsels the faithful to strive to be one body and one spirit. By one body is understood "one Faith," without divisions, without heresies and without self-will: the whole Church is one body of which Christ is the Head. By one spirit is understood "love," the ardent love of all the faithful for Christ, from which proceeds mutual love. The many become as one; many men become as one man. This is the miracle of the Christian Faith and Christian love. There is no power in the world which can be a stronger bond among men: not the same blood, or the same language, or the same hearth, or the same parents, or any type of common material interests. None of these is even nearly as powerful a bond as Christian faith and love. By this powerful, irresistible bond, all the members of the Church are bound to each other. The Church of God stands as one man, in time and in eternity—one body and one spirit. There is nothing more contradictory to this wondrous unity than the pride of individual men. Pride distorts faith, cools love, creates heresies, divides the Church, and sacrifices the good of the whole for individual satisfaction. Pride, in essence, is the absence of both faith and love. Brethren, may God save us from pride, the primal infirmity of the human race, that we may always be one body and one spirit in our Lord Jesus Christ.

To Thee, O Lord Jesus; to Thee, the Head of the Church, be glory and praise forever. Amen.

—From the Prologue From Ochrid, St. Nikolai Velimirovitch

## NEWS

- You can order delicious, high-quality coffee from Haiti for only \$15 a pound, and support the Haitian Orthodox Mission headed by Fr. Gregory Williams. The coffee is grown organically, purchased directly from a peasant-owned collective, and the roasted whole beans are vacuum-bagged. Just send your order (\$15 per pound, for shipping and handling \$5 for 1 or 2 packages; call 615/536-5239 for shipping cost of larger quantities) to: Haitian Orthodox Mission, attn: Mission Bleu Coffees, 1180 Orthodox Way, Liberty, TN 37095. It makes a nice gift.
- Don't forget to give your church a Christmas present this year.

## SCRIPTURES THIS WEEK

Today: Ephesians 2:14-22, Luke 8:41-56

Mon. 1 Timothy 5:1-10; Luke 17:20-25

Tue. 1 Timothy 5:11-21; Luke 17:26-37

Wed. 1 Timothy 5:22-6:11; Luke 18:15-17 & 26-30

Thu. 1 Timothy 6:17-21; Luke 18:31-34

Fri. 2 Timothy 1:1-18; Luke 19:12-28

Sat. Galatians 3:8-12; Luke 9:57-62

**Troparion, tone 8.** O All-Merciful Saviour, Thou Luminary like the sun: | Through the light of Thy radiance grant us eloquence, | that with pure conscience we may sing praises on Thy feast all-divine, | glorifying Thee the only-begotten Son, and the consubstantial Spirit; | for Thou givest us peace and great mercy.

**Kontakion, t. 4.** I committed every abomination, O All-Merciful Saviour, | and fell into the pit of despair. | Yet I groan from the depths of my heart | and cry to Thee, O Word: | Hasten, O Merciful One, | and quickly help us, | for merciful art Thou!

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