



HOLY TRINITY

ROMANIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH



723 N BODINE ST PHILADELPHIA, PA 19123

CHURCH BULLETIN

Vol. 13 No. 45 * Sunday November 1, 2020 * Editor: V. Rev. Fr. Nicolai Buga

The 22nd Sunday after Pentecost

Gospel Reading Luke 16: 19 - 31

The Lord said this parable: "There was a certain rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen and fared sumptuously every day. But there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, full of sores, who was laid at his gate, desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table. Moreover the dogs came and licked his sores. So it was that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels to Abraham's bosom. The rich man also died and was buried. And being in torments in Hades, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. Then he cried and said, 'Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.' But Abraham said, 'Son, remember that in

your lifetime you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted and you are tormented. And besides all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed, so that those who want to pass from here to you cannot, nor can those from there pass to us.' Then he said, 'I beg you therefore, father, that you would send him to my father's house, for I have five brothers, that he may testify to them, lest they also come to this place of torment.' Abraham said to him, 'They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.' And he said, 'No, father Abraham; but if one goes to them from the dead, they will repent.' But he said to him, 'If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rise from the dead.'"

Apostle Reading Galatians 6: 11 - 18

Brethren, See with what large letters I have written to you with my own hand! As many as desire to make a good showing in the flesh, these would compel you to be circumcised, only that they may not suffer persecution for the cross of Christ. For not even those who are circumcised keep the law, but they desire to have you circumcised that they may boast in your flesh. But God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus

Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but a new creation. And as many as walk according to this rule, peace and mercy be upon them, and upon the Israel of God. From now on let no one trouble me, for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus. Brethren, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen.

HOLY TRINITY
ROMANIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH
723 N Bodine St.
PHILADELPHIA, PA 19123
Tel./Fax: 215-922-7060
www.holytrinityphiladelphia.com

V. Rev. Fr. Nicolai BUGA, Rector
fr.n.buga@gmail.com
Rev. Fr. Timotei AVRAM, Assistant Priest
fr.timavram@gmail.com



INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Gospel & Apostle Readings	1
Fr. Matthew Dutko: The Time Is Now!	2 - 3
Liturgical Schedule from October 31 to November 15, 2020	3
Fr. Nicolas Apostola: <i>I Bear the Marks of Jesus</i>	4
Fr. Nicolai Buga: Soul Saturday	5 - 6
Saint John of Kronstadt: On the Angels	7 - 8

Synaxarion. Sunday November 1, 2020, The 22nd Sunday after Pentecost: Holy Unmercenary Physicians Holy and Wonderworkers Cosmas and Damian; Holy Venerable Theodota

The time is now!

Of all the religious teachers in history, Christ was the only one qualified to speak with authority about death and the afterlife. He is the only one who claimed He would die and return from the dead. And then He did just that. So, when Christ speaks of the afterlife, we can be assured he knows what he's talking about.



The story of the afterlife told by Christ in today's reading from the Holy Gospels, has four important lessons we can learn. First lesson: financial status is no reflection of faith. One could title Christ's story "rich man, poor man." And we learn much from the experience of the rich man. Christ speaks about a man who was so wealthy he could "live in luxury every day." That phrase meant he didn't have to work. He was one of those whom we moderns might call the "idle rich." In Christ's day people made the mistake of thinking wealth was connected to goodness. Wealthy people were rich because they were good. Poor people lived in poverty because they were evil. When the rich man died, there no doubt was a huge funeral at which people spoke of the rich man's greatness and goodness. However, Christ said he ended up in the flames of hell!

Christ is saying that net worth has nothing to do with one's standing before God. There's nothing wrong with being wealthy. That is, as long as the rich acknowledge God as the source of wealth. But it's obvious this rich man was a self-made, self-centered person. His sin was not in being wealthy. His sin was ignoring the needs of Lazarus who was begging at his doorstep every day. Thus, financial status is no reflection of faith.

The second lesson from this story of Christ is this. Knowing God doesn't excuse anyone from suffering. In contrast

to the rich man, Lazarus was a man who had a relationship with God. When he died he was escorted by the angels into the presence of Abraham. He went to heaven. But look at the condition of Lazarus's earthly life! Christ said he was a beggar. He was carried to the door of the rich man's house every day to scrounge

around for a few crumbs. Not only was he a beggar, but he had some kind of painful skin disorder. Christ said he was covered with sores. He was so weak he couldn't stop the street dogs from licking the sores. What a picture of a sad, suffering existence! Which of those two people, Lazarus or the rich man was right with God while he was alive? Many might have picked the rich man. Many would have been wrong!

There are some who preach a health and wealth gospel that says if you are right with God, you will always prosper and always be healthy. Apparently poor Lazarus couldn't get that station on his cable. The truth is, sometimes righteous people suffer a great deal in this life. But thankfully, this life is not all there is!

So, lesson three: when your body dies, you will continue to exist – either in heaven or in hell. The rich man and the poor man each lived totally different lives. But they had one thing in common: they both died. But that's not the end. At the point of physical death, the body ceases to function. But the soul continues to live on. While together, the soul and body have journeyed through life. They have (hopefully) ascended the ladder toward heaven. If the soul and body together are at the top of the ladder to heaven at death, the soul will continue on in eternal bliss with God. And the glorified body will follow at the final judgment.

The icon of the "Ladder of Divine Ascent" depicts that ladder going from the bottom left to the top right of the icon. At the top is Christ in glory with hands outstretched towards those people who are climbing the ladder. In the air and on the ground, are a number of demons. They are trying to shoot (with arrows) or drag people off the ladder. Some people are falling from the ladder.

The point is that no matter how high a person might ascend, no matter how close to God one may come, it is still possible to fall. It is still possible to turn from God. Yes, life continues after death. The question is where?

Thus, the final lesson from Christ' story: You've got a choice of where to spend eternity. When we get to heaven, we may be surprised to see who's there. And who is not! We will not only see Lazarus there. We will see a man who lied and deceived and stole something that wasn't his: Jacob. We'll see a man who committed both adultery and murder: David. We'll even meet a man who lived a life of crime, and was granted paradise a few minutes before he died. You remember thief who were crucified with Christ.

What was the difference between the two thieves? What was the difference between Lazarus and the rich man? What is the difference between some people who go to heaven and those who don't? The difference is the choices that each one makes while still alive! It is the choice to repent of sin or not. It is a choice to belong to the Body of Christ or not to. It is the choice to trust in the way of riches and the world, or the way God has provided through the Church. It was Jacob's choice. It was David's choice. It was the thief's choice. It was the rich man's choice. It was Lazarus's choice. It is our choice, too.

Oh, yes – there is one more lesson. This directly from this story: after death there are no more choices. After death there is no repentance. The time is now!

Father Matthew Dutko

(Saint Elizabeth Orthodox Church in Woodstock, GA)



HOLY TRINITY'S Liturgical Schedule from October 31 to November 8, 2020

Saturday October 31-

Soul Saturday:

9:00 am - Matins

9:30 am - Divine Liturgy

11:00 am - Memorial Service

6:00 pm - Vespers performed
by HE Metropolitan Nicolae

Sunday November 1 (22nd

Sunday after Pentecost) -

Bogdan Manea's Consecration to the Holy Diaconate:

9:00 am - Matins

10:30 am - Divine Liturgy and Mr. Bog-
dan Manea's Consecration to the Holy
Diaconate

1:30 pm - Dinner offered in Honor of
HE Metropolitan Nicolae

Sunday November 8 (24th

Sunday after Pentecost) -

Synaxis of the Holy Archangels Michael and Gabriel:

9:30 am - Matins

10:30 am - Divine Liturgy

11:00 Sunday School

12:30 pm - Coffee Hour

Saturday November 15 -

Last Day before the Nativity Fast

Sunday November 15 (25th

Sunday after Pentecost) -

Nativity Fast (Advent) Begins:

9:30 am - Matins

10:30 am - Divine Liturgy

11:00 Sunday School

12:30 pm - Coffee Hour

“I Bear the Marks of Jesus”

This Sunday the Epistle Lesson is taken from St. Paul’s Letter to the Galatians, 6:11-18. St. Paul was writing the Galatians about the negative influence a group of Jewish converts to Christ was having on their community. Galatia was a province located in north central Asia Minor, present-day Turkey. The larger cities of Galatia contained a mixed population of locals as well as Greeks and Romans. Greek and Latin were the languages there. In the more rural areas the population was largely Galatian; they were related to the Celts and spoke a language more akin to Celtic than the languages of their neighbors.

Today’s reading is the close of St. Paul’s Letter to them. It starts out: “See with what large letters I am writing to you with my own hand.” (v. 11) St. John Chrysostom believes this indicates that St. Paul had written the whole Letter himself, rather than leave the task to a scribe.

For him, this was an indication of the intense concern Paul had about the situation, and for the Galatians themselves. Modern scholars think that the first part of the Letter was given to a scribe to write and that St. Paul wrote this part by way of emphasis. Either way, St. Paul is clearly upset and concerned.

Here is the reason: “It is those who want to make a good showing in the flesh that would compel you to be circumcised, and only in order that they may not be persecuted for the cross of Christ. For even those who receive circumcision do not themselves keep the law, but they desire to have you circumcised that they may glory in your flesh.” (v. 12-13)

It might seem odd to us that a practice, done today for largely medical reasons, was a deeply religious question in the early Church. However, according to the Mosaic Law, the primary sign of the covenant between the Children of Israel and God was circumcision. It was and still is what defines Jews as a people set apart. For St. Paul, being required to accept circumcision as a condition of conversion was to subject yourself to the Old Covenant. It was a step backward.

St. Paul’s contention was that these people had no interest in truly proclaiming the Good News of Christ’s coming. Rather, they wanted these Galatians to undergo a ritual that was largely for show, while ignoring the true internal spiritual transformation that should occur in those who follow the Lord. These were fundamentalists. Rather than stand up for Christ — which would have probably subjected them to persecution — they took the ‘zealous’ route that would make them look devout, but really cost them nothing. This is what’s behind the statement: “they desire to have you circumcised that they may glory in your flesh.”

His answer to these ‘missionaries’ is: “But far be it from

me to glory except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. For neither circumcision counts for anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation.” (v. 14-15)

By the “cross” St. Paul means the whole ‘economy’ of our salvation; the whole of God’s plan for us beginning with Adam and Eve, and culminating in the Lord’s death and resurrection. He also means the cross that every Christian takes up when they decide to follow Christ. The ‘world’ that has been crucified to him is the world of sin and excess; the passions that lead away from God. This should be the cross that we ourselves pick up, choosing against sin and for the Lord.

St. Paul then offers a blessing: “Peace and mercy be upon all who walk by this rule, upon the Israel of God.” (v. 16) He is sending two subtle messages in this blessing. He is saying that those who follow the ‘rule,’ that is, who choose the newness of Christ over the ‘dead end’ of the Law, will receive God’s peace and mercy. And, by referring to the ‘Israel of God’ he is at once answering his critics — the Judaizers — that he is not ‘Jewish’ enough, as well as asserting that the ‘Israel of God’ is now the followers of Christ.

Expressing his exasperation with the Judaizers, he says: “Henceforth let no man trouble me; for I bear on my body the marks of Jesus.” (v. 17) The word translated here as “marks” is, in Greek, “stigmata.” Because of how we use ‘stigmata’ today, it has led some people to speculate that St. Paul had on his body the crucifixion wounds of Christ.

However, in the ancient world this word meant something like “branding.” It was used for the branding marks burned into slaves and cattle. It is more likely that St. Paul means the very real scars on his body that were the result of the multiple floggings he had received. Anyone who has seen photographs of the backs of slaves who had been flogged will immediately understand what he is talking about. His scars mark him as belonging to Christ.

He finishes this rather harsh Letter with a blessing: “The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brethren. Amen.” (v. 18) He chooses words — and especially the very final word, the affectionate term ‘brethren’ (brothers and sisters) — that will soften whatever hurt they may be feeling, and to let them know that from his perspective all is healed. As we reflect on St. Paul’s words, let us also recommit ourselves to take up our cross and follow the Lord as St. Paul himself did.

Fr. Nicholas Apostola

Soul Saturday

Every year, in early November, the Orthodox Church commemorates the faithful departed to the Lord. Also known as "All Souls' Day," this memorial day is called in Romanian "Moșii de Toamnă". The term «Moși» is closely related to «Strămoși» (ancestors, forefathers). Without having a fixed date, this memorial day always falls on a Saturday.



Hades for only one of-fence they would like if Christ could give them only five minutes to repent. We, who are alive, still have time for repentance, but the unfortunate

reposed, they cannot improve their condition [by themselves --our note - N.B.], so they await our

This year "All Souls' Day" falls on November 5, when it is customary that believers pray especially (but not exclusively) for all their relatives who have fallen asleep in the Lord and for others among the faithful who might not be commemorated by anybody.

Moreover, we must mention that generally memorial services - called "parastase" in Romanian and "panikhida" in Slavonic - are held on Saturdays, though, for practical reasons, they can also take place on Sunday sometimes.

Why on Saturdays? Because Saturday is the day when the Lord's body was laid in the grave and His soul descended to hell, to release all righteous dead before His coming.

The Church calls the dead ones "asleep", using a term taken from the Holy Scriptures of the New Testament. In the Gospel of Luke, chapter 8, where the miracle of resurrection from the dead daughter of Jairus is rendered, Christ uses the word "asleep", giving it a meaning that is associated with the resurrection. When our Savior reaches the house of Jairus, whose only daughter - aged barely 12 - had just died, He tells the parents and the audience: "Do not weep; she is not dead, but asleep" (Luke 8: 52). Consequently, the Church does not speak of a man's passage to a state of nonexistence, as some Romanian journalists put it, but of a passage from one mode of being to another, from one realm to another.

Of course, one may ask, "What is the point of these memorials?" In the words of St. Paisios the Athonite, *"prayers and memorials from those who are still alive on behalf of the reposed are the last opportunity that the Lord gives to help them before the Last Judgment. After the trial, it will not be possible to help them anymore."* St. Paisios continues saying: *"They [...] seek help, but they are not able to help themselves. All those who are in*

help. Therefore, our duty is to help them with our prayer."

So, besides the common memorial days dedicated to specific individual remembrance, the Church has also settled special days of general remembrance of the reposed. These special Saturdays are called "Saturdays of the Souls," while the Romanian old tradition designates them as the "Moși" (plural).

The word "Moș" (singular) [pronounced *mosh*] designates an elderly man and often precedes a given name, "Moș Ion", "Moș Toader" (Uncle John or Old John; Uncle Theodor or Old Theodore) etc. In many regions of Romania, such as Bucovina, my home province, the word can also mean, "grandpa". For me, my grandfather - God rest his soul! - was simply "Moșul" - my Granpa. Some believe that the plural "moși" -- referring to persons that are passed away -- comes from "strămoși", i.e. great-grandfathers, ancestors. In my opinion, it is the other way round, namely, the term "strămoși" was formed from "moși", to which the prefix "stră" was added, like in "străbunici" (great grandparents) that was formed of "bunici" (grandparents) plus the prefix "stră" and not vice versa. Thus, we have a "Moși" celebration (a Soul Saturday) every season of the year, including the Fall "All Souls' Day" ("Moșii de Toamnă").

Regarding the origin of Romanian tradition of the "Moși", ethnologists believe that it is reminiscent of the Dacians' archaic cult of ancestors. It is known that in Antiquity, Thracians and their relatives, Getae - Dacians (a branch of the Thracians) were the most numerous people after the Indians. The area inhabited by them stretched across Central and Southeastern Europe. It may be precisely this historical fact that could explain why the tradition

of commemorating ancestors has become so important to this cultural space inhabited by Orthodox Christian nations today (Greeks, Romanians, Bulgarians, Serbs etc.).

Wildly recognized experts in the field of Church History and Liturgics mention testimonies about the existence of the Soul Saturday tradition as early as the 9th century (at the Monastery of Studion in Constantinople) as well as from the 17th century Greece. Russian Church also celebrates this fall remembrance of the departed, namely the Saturday before the feast of St. Demetrius.

As we have already mentioned, our congregation will also celebrate the "Saturday of the Soul" this coming Saturday, November 5, 2016, at 11 am, after the Divine Liturgy. It is good that parishioners wishing to honor their beloved departed ones to come to church early, before the beginning of the Divine Liturgy and leave diptych (pomelnic) with a prosphora (prescura) and a candle, to the priest, before the Liturgy begins, thus giving him the opportunity to pray for them and to mention their names at the Proskomedia, while taking small particles from the prosphora. Those particles, called *miride* in Romanian, are placed on the holy tray (discos) near the *Agneta* [Agnus (Latin for lamb) - a cubical piece of bread, holding the seal -- IC, XC, NI-KA, Jesus Christ is Victorious -- representing Christ, the Lamb of God]. I have to add that the priest does the same for the living, as well. During the Divine Liturgy, those particles for both, the living and the dead, are placed into the Blood of the Lord with the words, "Through the prayers of Thy saints, wash away, O Lord, with Thy precious Blood, the sins of those commemorated here."

The following story about the dream of a humble Hieromonk of the Kiev Lavra reveals that we can do nothing greater, nothing better for the departed than to pray for them, offering their names for commemoration at the Divine Liturgy. There was this Father Alexei, who was in charge of taking care of the relics of St. Theodosius of Chernigov (†February 5, 1696; glorified in 1869), located in the monastery. One day, while he was re-vesting the holy relics, before having completed the job, being tired, the old father dozed off near the relics coffin. As he was sleeping, St. Theodosius appeared to him and said, "Thank you for toiling on my behalf. But I also ask you to commemorate my parents, when serving the Divine Liturgy," - and he gave father Alexei their names, Nikita, the priest, and presbytera Maria. "But how is it that you, a holy hierarch, are asking for my prayers, when you

stand at the throne of Heaven and intercede God's mercy

in behalf of people?" - asked the humble priest. "That is true," replied the Saint, "but the offering at the Divine Liturgy have more power than my prayers."

We Orthodox pray for those who have departed, because we believe that, through our prayers, their souls will reach upon the Last Judgment a better state than that one they had when being separated from their bodies.

St. Paisios the Athonite says that the memorial prayers are wonderful lawyers that speak on behalf of the dead ones. . Indeed, the prayers of the memorial services are the most sensitive and persuasive pleading for the reposed to the Throne of the Judgement. The best lawyer possible, the Church, is the one who utters this pleading to the Lord, through us, its members - priests and faithful.

The remembrance of those who sleep is at the same time, an opportunity to restore blessed spiritually - through prayer and jobs performed by priests - those who left our connection with the Lord. Under this communion of the living - the Church Militant - Continue to pray for the dead faith - the Church triumphant - and to mention souls at certain appointed seasons.

Love is therefore the miraculous power to unite with loved ones. The ancient Orthodox tradition of praying and giving almonds for the memory of the dead is a further proof that, as St. Paul says, "love never dies" (I Cor. 13: 8). It is the glue that unites us, the living, the dead, as members of the same Church. "Therefore we must do in remembrance of the dead and the saints to mention that, rejoicing them, to make them praying and happy for us to God", St. Simeon the New Theologian says (St. Simeon of Thessalonica, VI, 375).

V. Rev. Fr. Nicolai Buga



thousand years; imagine all the people, beginning with Adam, to the present day; there is a great multitude of them. But it is yet small in comparison with the angels, of which there are many more!

They are the ninety and nine sheep of the parable, but mankind is only one sheep. For according to the extent of universal space, we must reckon the number of its inhabitants. The whole earth inhabited by us is like a point in the midst of heaven and yet contains so great a multitude; what a multitude must the heaven which encircles it contain! And must not the heaven of heavens contain unimaginable numbers? If it is written that 'a thousand thousands ministered to Him; and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before Him,' it is only because the prophet could not express a greater number."

In view of such a multitude of angels, it is natural to suppose that in the world of angels, just as in the material world, there are various degrees of perfection and, therefore, various stages or hierarchical degrees of the heavenly powers. Thus, the word of God calls some *Angels* and some *Archangels* (1 Thess. 4:16; Jude verse 9).

The Orthodox Church, guided by the views of the ancient writers of the Church and Church Fathers, divides the world of the angels into nine choirs or ranks, and these nine into three hierarchies, each hierarchy having three ranks. The first hierarchy consists of those spirits who are closest to God, namely, the Thrones, Cherubim and Seraphim. Within the second, the middle hierarchy, are the Authorities, Dominions and Powers. In the third, which is closer to us, are the Angels, Archangels and Principalities. Thus, the existence of the Angels and Archangels is witnessed by almost every page in the Holy Scriptures. The books of the prophets mention the Cherubim and Seraphim. *Cherubim* means to be near; hence it means the near ones; *Seraphim* means *fiery*, or *filled with fire*. The names of the other angelic ranks are mentioned by the Apostle Paul in his epistle to the Ephesians, saying that Christ is in the heavens "*far above any Principality, and Authority, and Power, and Dominion*" (Ephesians 1:21).

Besides these angelic ranks, Saint Paul teaches in his epistles to the Colossians that the Son of God created everything visible and invisible, "*Thrones, Dominions, or Principalities, or Powers*" (Colossians 1:16). Consequently, when we join the Thrones to those four about which the Apostle speaks to the Ephesians, that is, the Principalities, Authorities, Powers and Dominions, there are five ranks; and when to these we add Angels, Archangels, Cherubim and Seraphim, then there are nine angelic ranks.

In addition, some Church Fathers expressed the opinion that dividing the angels into nine choirs touched only upon those names that are revealed by the word of God but in no

way encompasses other names and choirs of angels that have not been as yet revealed to us. For example, the Apostle John the Theologian mentions in the book of Revelation mysterious creatures and the seven spirits by the throne of God: "*Grace be to you and peace from Him who is and who was and who is coming, and from the seven spirits who are before His throne*" (Apocalypse 1:4). The Apostle Paul in his epistle to the Ephesians writes that Christ resides in heaven far above the enumerated angels and "*every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come*" (1:21). Thus he hints that in Heaven there are other spiritual creatures whose names are yet not revealed to mankind.

In the Holy Scriptures, some angels are called by their own names. For example, the prophet Daniel, the Apostle Jude, and the book of Revelation mention the archangel Michael (Joshua 5:13; Daniel 10:13 and 12:1; Jude verse 9; Revelation 12:7-8). The name *Michael* in Hebrew means *Who is like God*? In the Scriptures he is mentioned as *the army of God* and is depicted as the main fighter against the devil and his servants. Usually he is painted with a flaming sword in hand. The name *Gabriel* means *strength of God*. Both the prophet Daniel and the evangelist Luke mention Gabriel (Daniel 8:16, 9:21; Luke 1:19-26). In the Scriptures he is represented as the messenger of God's mysteries. In icons he is painted with a lily in his hand. The Scriptures mention by name three more angels: *Raphael — Assistance of God*, *Uriel — Flame of God*, and *Salathiel — Prayer book to God* (Tobit 3:16 and 12:12-15; 3 Esdras 4:1 and 5:20; 3 Esdras 5:16 [Note: 3 Esdras in the Slavonic Bible = 2 Esdras KJV, or 4 Esdras in Vulgate Appendix]).

What are the tasks of the beings of the spiritual world? Evidently they are designated by God to be the most perfect reflections of His greatness and glory, with inseparable participation in His blessedness. If of the visible heavens it is said, "*the heavens proclaim the glory of God*," then all the more is this the aim of the spiritual heavens. The prophet Isaiah was honored to see "*the Lord sitting on the high extolled throne, the hems of His vestments filling the whole temple. Surrounding Him were the Seraphim, each having six wings; with two they covered His face, with two they covered His feet, and they flew with the other two. And they called to each other and said: Holy, Holy, Holy, the Lord Sabaoth! The whole world is filled with His Glory*" (Isaiah 6:1-4; Ezekiel ch. 10).

Bishop Alexander Mileant

11/20/2011

(Source: Orthodox Christianity:
<http://orthochristian.com/42954.html>)

On the Angels

"Who maketh his angels spirits; his ministers a flaming fire" (Ps. 104:4).

These are the words of the King and Prophet David. With these words, he said that God created the wisest minds, the fleshless spirits, servants loyal to Him, who burn with eternal love for God, fulfill God's will and abide in the unapproachable light of the Throne of Glory. The Lord created the angels as wise, powerful, eternally holy, purity and within Divine truth. Ponder this, dear brothers and sisters, delve into this with your minds. The Lord divided all the angels into nine orders, or ranks: the thrones, the dominions, principalities, powers, authorities and others; they all obey each other—the lower orders obey the higher orders. In the likeness of the heavenly hierarchy, the Lord established three ranks in the Church Militant: the bishops, priests and deacons, who also obey each other.

God created an innumerable multitude of angels. When you came to liturgy this morning, maybe someone among you looked into the sky and saw how many stars fill the heavens. There are so many stars that it seems that the sky is filled with poppy seeds. No mortal can count them all. As one cannot count the stars in the heavens, so can one not count the number of holy angels. One star shines brighter, another less so, but each of them is greater than our world, larger than the Earth, this is known and has been proven.

The countless multitude of angels abide in the heavens, in the presence of God, fulfill God's will and eternally glorify God. Some of them are appointed by God to humans, these are our guardian angels who protect people throughout their lives, from baptism until death, keep evil away from them and direct them to all truth and goodness. If a person lives righteously, lives well, he will



feel this himself. Think, dear brothers and sisters, how close angels are to us!

Today we celebrate the Synaxis of Archangel Michael and the Bodiless Powers. You probably know or have heard of the miracle performed by Archangel Michael. A few impious people had decided to kill Saint Archippus and the destroy the church he built; they channeled a great river towards the church, but Archangel Michael appeared to Archippus, consoled him, split a cliff asunder, and directed the river towards the rocky chasm, so that the water did not flood the church, and the church and Archippus were saved.

Angels are not prone to sin, they cannot even think sinful thoughts—their notions

and desires are pure. They are imparted with all perfection, they are always wise, always strong, always good. They firmly established themselves in love for God, in holiness and truth and do not fall into sin, only some of them, a third overall, saddened the Lord with their disobedience and could no longer be citizens of the heavens; they were cast down by God. And you, my friends, should emulate the angels loyal to God, and after being citizens of the earthly fatherland, you will become co-citizens with them of the heavenly fatherland. Emulate the angles, especially since you are created in the image of God; this gift is common to angels and men. Honor the angels, my friends, imitate their holiness, their love and devotion to God, and you will be worthy of the blessed live in heaven together with them. Amen.

St. John of Kronstadt

(Source: <http://becomeorthodox.org/on-the-holy-angels/>)