



HOLY TRINITY

ROMANIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH



723 N BODINE ST PHILADELPHIA, PA 19123

CHURCH BULLETIN

Vol. 13 No. 51 * Sunday December 13, 2020 * Editor: V. Rev. Fr. Nicolai Buga

The 28th Sunday after Pentecost

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

Rev. Deacon Petru Bogdan MANEA
pbmanea81@gmail.com

Gospel Reading Luke 14: 16 - 24

The Lord said this parable: "A man once gave a great banquet, and invited many; and at the time of the banquet he sent his servant to say to those who had been invited, 'Come; for all is now ready.' But they all alike began to make excuses. The first said to him, 'I have bought a field, and I go out and see it; I pray you, have me excused.' And another said, 'I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I must go to examine them; I pray you, have me excused.' And another said, 'I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.' So the servant came and

reported this to his master. Then the householder in anger said to his servant, 'Go out quickly to the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in the poor and maimed and blind and lame.' And the servant said, 'Sir, what you commanded has been done, and there is still room.' And the master said to the servant, 'Go out to the highways and hedges, and compel people to come in, that my house may be filled. For I tell you, none of those men who were invited shall taste my banquet. For many are called, but few are chosen.'"

Apostle Reading Colossians 3: 14- 11

Brethren, giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light. He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love, in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins. He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by Him all things were created that are in heav-

en and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist. And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence.



INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Gospel Reading	1
Apostle Reading	1
Fr. Robert Miclean: Homily for the Forefathers of Christ	2 - 3
Liturgical Schedule: from December 12 to December 27, 2020	3
Fr. Nicholas Apostola: Please R.S.V.P.	4

Synaxarion. Sunday December 16, 2018 (The 28th Sunday after Pentecost - All Forefathers Sunday - fish allowed): Holy Prophet Aggaeus, Holy Empress Theophana

Homily on the Forefathers of Christ

Today the herald of the Feast of the Nativity bids us be attentive: Today is the Sunday of the Forefathers of Christ—the 11th hour of Advent: the Lord is coming!

This Sunday the Lord invites us to recall his earthly forefathers, both those before the Law and those after the Law of Moses. On this day, we begin to ponder in advance of the Feast what it means that God took on human flesh and human nature

and became one of His own creation, adding Himself to the genealogy of that created human order He Himself called into being by His own Word.

The list of those ancestors of Christ—the forefathers—contains a list of the “who’s who” of the Old Testament—Saints and sinners alike, men and even women who were either sinners or foreigners. The women point to the prominent place that they will play in mankind’s redemption through the Virgin Mary, the new Eve, and the women disciples of the Lord. Underscored here is that Christ came to redeem all of humanity, human nature itself, in order to create a new race of Adam—not one based on gender, race, place, or time, but one grounded in the firm and eternal foundation that is our identity in Christ God.

Already, even before He sent out His disciples to preach the good news to “all nations”, Christ Himself hails, in part, from Gentile seed. The Jew of Jews, St. Paul, reminds us of this truth in today’s Epistle, saying, “there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised nor uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave nor free, but Christ is all and in all.” (Col. 3:11).

We who worship here today are inheritors of this promise that God made to Abraham when He declared, “in your seed, all the nations of the earth shall be blessed” (Gen. 26:4). Many Jews saw this promise as given purely through the Abrahamic blood line, grounded in this world and, in turn, partaking of the fallen race of Adam.

But God had something greater in mind: the renewal and regeneration of the human race where everyone is called. No one is excluded from the calling to be renewed with



Christ, the new Adam, to become a co-heir with Him. In Matthew’s genealogy Christ’s ancestors include both righteous and unrighteous, faithful kings and murderers, Jews and Gentiles, kings and peasants, men and women. The hallmark of all is cooperation with the work of God through faith, cooperation with the Holy Spirit’s work in our lives, faith.

It’s not the sum of their sins, but the faithfulness of the fo-

refathers’ repentance which is remembered and summed up in Psalm 50, “a broken and humbled heart God will not despise.” The Prophet and King David, who composed this Psalm from the depths of his soul, repenting of murder and adultery, testifies to this truth. For this reason, we pray this psalm every morning that we may remember repentance and remember God’s gracious forgiveness.

But what if we don’t avail ourselves of this great gift of God’s mercy? What if we keep putting off repentance out of fear, which is, in reality, a form of pride, of over reliance on self and not on God. What if we buy into the consumerism and materialism of our present world and forget God and our calling in Him? What if we begin to take God’s grace and love for granted, this greatest of gifts, which is our new life in the human nature which Christ has renewed? Today’s Gospel is an invitation but it’s also a warning to not take God’s mercy and love for granted. All are called, but not all choose to be among the chosen of God. If we refuse, others will come in our place. God’s life is never forced upon us; we can choose death, that is, apartness from God and His life.

Those who reject the fullness of the life in Christ are not worthy of that life. Jesus says, “Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest” (Matt. 11:28). He calls on us who thirst, to come and drink (John 7:37). And, most audaciously, Christ says, “Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice, I will come into him and dine with him and he with Me.” How do we dare despise this invitation to share in koinonia with the King, our Creator, our Savior?

God loves us too much to hold back from warning us beforehand of the consequences of neglecting His gracious invitation, of disavowing ourselves of communion with the Life that He alone is, as He does with this parable of the great supper in today's Gospel.

St. Paul too, for his part, warns us specifically of some of the passions that will keep us from this life in the Kingdom with God if we do not turn from them, saying, "therefore, put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry.

Now is the time for repentance. Now is the time to make confession and renew our baptism in Christ. Now is the time to prepare for His coming. Advent is meant to spur us on to make our souls ready to greet Christ when He comes, as we prepare to receive Him in the Eucharist of the Feast and as we await His glorious and Second Coming.

Now is the time for us to rouse ourselves to action—to repent in word and deed. We, for our part, make ready to receive the King of all, humbly born in a manger in a cave for our salvation that He may make us humble, in turn, to teach us the way of true courage, humility, dying to self that we may live for Him and with Him for all eternity. Christ is coming again to judge the living and the dead, and each one of us.

So let us rouse ourselves from all spiritual lethargy, all fear all pride, to live lives reflective of the new creation we've become in Christ, "where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised nor uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave nor free, but Christ is all and in all."

We are called to continue to grow through deification. Let us repent with sincerity of heart, that we may with good conscience, receive Christ God at His glorious nativity.

Christ God is here, in our midst, ready to welcome us to His supper, ready to dine with us, to commune with us, to heal us, to make us whole. May we say "YES!" to God's gracious invitation and make ready our souls to receive the King of kings and Lord of lords, who has become incarnate in the flesh by the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary for our sake and that of the entire human race.

Fr. Robert Miclean

(Source: <https://www.orthodoxannapolis.org>)



HOLY TRINITY'S Liturgical Schedule from December 13 to December 27, 2020

Sunday December 13 (28th Sunday after Pentecost - fish allowed):

9:00 am - Matins
10:00 am - Divine Liturgy
11:00 am - Sunday School
11:30 pm - Memorial Service
12:00 pm - Coffee Hour

Saturday December 19:

11:00 am - Christmas Tree Decoration

Sunday December 20 (Sunday before the Nativity of Our Lord):

9:00 am - Matins
10:00 am - Divine Liturgy
11:00 am - Sunday School
12:00 pm - Coffee Hour

Thursday December 19 - Eve of Nativity (strict fast)

Friday December 25 - Nativity of Our Lord (Christmas Day):

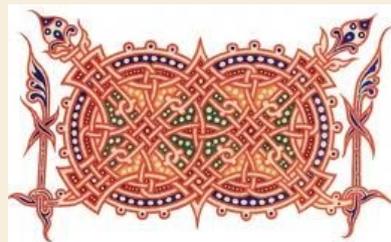
9:00 am - Matins
10:00 am - Holy Liturgy
12:00 am - Christmas Carols
12:30 pm - Christmas Brotherly Meal

Saturday December 26 - Synaxis of the Most Holy Theotokos (Second Day of Christmas):

9:00 am - Matins
10:00 am - Holy Liturgy
12:00 pm - Coffee hour

Sunday December 27 (Sunday after the Nativity of Our Lord) - St Stephen's Day:

9:00 am - Matins
10:00 am - Holy Liturgy
12:00 pm - Coffee hour



Please R.S.V.P.

This week's Gospel lesson is the Parable of the Great Banquet (Luke 14:16-24). St. Matthew also has an account of this same parable (22:1-4) that we hear on the 14th Sunday after Pentecost. However, while both Evangelists relate a similar story, the different contexts in which they are placed shifts the focus of the parable. St. Matthew places his account of the Wedding Feast in a sequence of other parables that Jesus spoke intending to challenge the hypocrisy of the religious authorities of his time. St. Luke places his account in the context of Jesus teaching about humility and hospitality.

In trying to explain what the Kingdom of Heaven is like, Jesus uses the image of a Great Banquet. In an earlier part of this chapter (v. 8-9), he says, "When you are invited by someone to a wedding banquet, do not sit down in the place of honor, in case someone more distinguished than you has been invited by your host, and the host who invited both of you may come and say, 'Give up your place to this man.' And then in disgrace you would start to take the lowest place." He goes on to say that "all who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted" (v. 11).

Jesus then moves on to speak about hospitality. He says, "When you give a luncheon or dinner, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or rich neighbors, in case that they may invite you in return, and you would be repaid. But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind. And you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you" (v. 12-14).

Very often we struggle to understand what St. Paul means when he says, "by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God" (Ephesians 2:8). In the Lord's teaching on hospitality we gain an insight into what St. Paul means when he says we have been saved "by grace." When we read this parable many of us perhaps identify with the host who extends the invitation and is turned-down by his guests. But, in actuality, we are the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind who have been invited to the banquet. We are the ones who do not have the ability to repay. We have a place at the table only because of God's grace and His love.



This Parable of the Great Banquet can be very helpful for us as we prepare for the Feast of the Lord's Birth. When the Lord wants to show us what the Kingdom of God is like, he gives us joyful images like a banquet (Luke 14:16), or a wedding feast (Matthew 22:1), or a bridal chamber (Matthew 25:1, John 3:29).

He also gives us transformative images like yeast (Luke 13:20), or the mustard seed (Luke 13:18). He wants us to see the Kingdom of God as something that will bring happiness to our lives even as we are changed by it.

And, who does God send to extend his invitation for us to attend this Banquet? God sends the invitation in the form of His Son, who embodies the very humility he preaches to us. This Son does not take the first seat, but the last. He does not impose himself, but comes as a vulnerable child. And showing us what he means by hospitality, he invites not only the rich and powerful, but also the lowly and the unimportant, the meek and the poor.

We all know it is hard to focus on the spiritual importance of the holiday. During this time of year we are wittingly or unwittingly distracted from responding to the Lord's invitation as we should. We are preoccupied with family and social obligations. There are decorations to hang and gifts to buy. Commercial interests conspire to twist the miracle of Christ's birth to increase the bottom line. Yet still, neither are we captives nor victims. We can choose. This is the point of the Parable. People were invited to feast at God's table yet they chose the distractions of life over the joy of the Kingdom.

We are invited to the Feast, but if we choose not to attend, the Banquet Hall will not remain empty. The Lord will fill His House, and He will fill it as it pleases Him (v. 23). We should take care not to be blinded by the frenzy of the season, and as a result reject the invitation offered us. Rather, we should actively seek out refuge in that quiet cave in Bethlehem, where rests a young child, the pre-eternal God.

Father Nicholas Apostola