



Parish Information Bulletin

SUNDAY 13 DECEMBER

11th Sunday of Luke, Sunday of the Holy Forefathers
Luke 14: 16-24, Matt. 22: 14

- 8.00am
Orthros and Divine Liturgy

TUESDAY 15 DECEMBER

*St Eleutherios
and his mother Anthia*

- 8.00am
Orthros and Divine Liturgy

THURSDAY 17 DECEMBER

St Dionysios of Zakynthos

- 8.00am
Orthros and Divine Liturgy

SUNDAY 20 DECEMBER

Epistle Reading: Hebrew 11: 9,10, 32-40
Gospel Reading: Matthew 1: 1-25

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Fr Athanasios and
Fr Ephraim are available
at the Church every
Monday to Friday
between 4.00 and 6.00pm
for Holy Confession and
any spiritual need.

When you throw
a nail into a fire,
it gets hot
and starts to glow
like fire.
In the same way
you, when you
listen to divine
teachings
and live
accordingly,
will become
like God.



St. Symeon
of Daibabe

Apolytikion of St. Eleutherios the Hieromartyr Commemorated 15 December

Adorned with flowing priestly vesture and with dripping streams of blood you at once went to your Lord Christ, O blessed wise Eleftherios, annihilator of Satan. Wherefore, do not cease to intercede for those who honour your blessed struggles in faith.

St Dionysius of Zakynthos Commemorated 17 December

Saint Dionysius of Zakynthos, the Bishop of Aegina was born in 1547 on the island of Zakynthos. Though born into a noble family, he was determined to flee the world and set his mind upon heavenly things. He entered the monastery of Strophada, and after the prescribed time, he was clothed in the angelic schema by the abbot. Though young in years, he surpassed many of his elders in virtue, and was found worthy of ordination to the holy priesthood.

Although he protested his unworthiness, Saint Dionysius was consecrated Bishop of Aegina. In that office he never ceased to teach and admonish his flock, and many were drawn to him in order to profit from his wisdom. He feared the praise of men, lest he should fall into the sin of vainglory, so he resigned his See and returned to Zakynthos.

In 1579 the diocese of Zakynthos was widowed (when a bishop dies, his diocese is described as "widowed"), and Dionysius agreed to care for it until a new bishop could be elected. Then he fled from the worldly life which gave him no peace, and went to the Monastery of the Most Holy Theotokos Anaphonitria, twenty miles from the main village.

A certain stranger murdered the saint's brother Constantine, an illustrious nobleman. Fearing his victim's relatives, the stranger, by chance or by God's will, sought refuge in the monastery where Saint Dionysius was the abbot. When the saint asked the fugitive why he was so frightened, he confessed his sin and revealed the name of the man he had murdered, asking to be protected from the family's vengeance. Saint Dionysius wept for his only brother, as was natural. Then he comforted the murderer and hid him, showing him great compassion and love.

Soon the saint's relatives came to the monastery with a group of armed men and told him what had happened. He pretended to know nothing about it. After weeping with them and trying to console them, he sent them off in the wrong direction. Then he told the murderer that he was the brother of the man he had killed. He admonished him as a father, and brought him to repentance. After forgiving him, Saint Dionysius brought him down to the shore and helped him to escape to another place in order to save his life. Because of the saint's Christ-like virtue, he was granted the gift of working miracles.

Having passed his life in holiness, Saint Dionysius reached a great age, then departed to the Lord on December 17, 1624. Not only are the saint's relics incorrupt, but he is also one of Greece's "walking saints" (Saint Gerasimus and Saint Spyridon are the others). He is said to leave his reliquary and walk about performing miracles for those who seek his aid. In fact, the soles of his slippers wear out and must be replaced with a new pair from time to time. The old slippers are cut up, and the pieces are distributed to pilgrims. On August 24, we celebrate the Transfer of his Holy Relics. Through the prayers of Saint Dionysius, may Christ our God have mercy upon us and save us.

The Great Banquet of Christ's Birth

For Orthodox Christians, life is the experience of entering ever more deeply into the many and eternal banquets of Christ. The banquet of His love that we feast upon when we discover and convert to Him in our hearts. The banquet of repentance, where the Father makes merry when we return to Him, we prodigal sons and daughters. The banquet of His Holy Body and Blood that is offered to us every Sunday, the Lord's day—His banquet that we are called to weekly. The banquet of the fasts and feasts of the Church. And the greatest banquet of all! The feast spread out at the table of Christ's Second Coming when we will enter into the eternal feast of Paradise and when the righteous anger of the Householder will call to account those who rejected His invitation.

As we approach Nativity, the gospel account of the great banquet (Luke 14:16–24) is offered to us as a reminder that we are to be anticipating something profound and mysterious in the birth of Jesus. We prepare our hearts with fasting, for the banquet celebrating the wedding of Divinity to humanity is about to begin. And we are invited! We, the poor, maimed, blind, and lame. We, the inhabitants of the spiritual highways and hedges, the lonely roads and hiding places of this life. We are invited!

St. Athanasius depicts the transformation brought about for us in the Incarnation of Christ.

Having invented wickedness, and involved himself in death and corruption, man went on gradually from bad to worse, not stopping at any one kind of evil but continually devising new kinds of sin. Adulteries and thefts were everywhere, murder and slaughter filled the earth, law was disregarded and all kinds of iniquities were committed. Man was in the process of destruction. Man, who was created in God's image, was disappearing and the work of God was being undone. Therefore He, the Image of the Father, came and dwelt in our midst, in order that He might renew mankind made after Himself. And now, all the disciples of Christ despise death and take offense at it rather than fear it. By the sign of the cross and by faith in Christ, they trample it underfoot as if nothing. And the devil of old, who exulted in death, it is now he alone who remains truly dead. (On the Incarnation, pp. 41 – 57).

If only we can enter into this reality for a just little while! That our soul can taste something otherworldly and desire it. The curse of the Fall has been transformed. The flaming sword of the angel that guards the Tree of Life has been sheathed and the gates of Paradise reopened to all. Let us do all we can to set aside worldliness, and meditate on these things and pray, even for just a little while. The spirit of the Nativity fast does not even demand from us an eternal spiritual attentiveness, but for only forty days; and the fast is already half over.

We can do this! Let us set aside distractions, and the worldly things that we cling to, in order to take a little peaceful time alone and prepare our hearts for Nativity. Take five minutes. Go somewhere alone, undistracted and peaceful, and ask yourself: Why does God love me so much that He sent his Divine Son, the Creator, to endure everything a fallen human suffers, to accept an unjust and humiliating death, to be murdered, in order to allow me, with all my sins and all my false gods, to become immortal, eternal, like Him? Why?

St. Maximos the Confessors give us a hint as to the answer:

Jesus the Christ who was born in the flesh once for all of us, desires to be born again in the spirit in those who desire Him. In each of us, he again becomes a child in the womb of our soul and forms himself from the virtues. He reveals as much of Himself as He knows each of us can accept. Let us contemplate the mystery of the incarnation and in simplicity praise Him who became man for us. Faith alone can embrace these mysteries, for it is faith that makes real for us things that are beyond intellect and reason. (Philokalia, Vol. 2, p. 165)

Source: St. Lawrence Orthodox Church

"Do you ask why God was born among men?"

St. Gregory of Nyssa wrote:

"Here is the reason for God's presence among men. Our nature was sick and needed a doctor. Man had fallen and needed someone to raise him up. He who had ceased to participate in the good needed someone to bring him back to it. He who was shut in darkness needed the presence of life.

The prisoner was looking for someone to ransom him, the captive for someone to take his part.

He who was under the yoke of slavery was looking for someone to set him free.

Were these trifling and unworthy reasons to impel God to come down to visit human nature...?"