



Parish Information Bulletin

Program for 21—27 November 2021

SUNDAY 21 NOVEMBER

ENTRY OF THE THEOTOKOS TO THE TEMPLE, Luke 10: 38-42, 11: 27-28
• 7.30am—Orthros and Divine Liturgy

MONDAY 22 NOVEMBER *St Iakovos Tsalikis of Evia*

• 7.30am—Orthros and Divine Liturgy

THURSDAY 25 NOVEMBER *St Katherine, Great-Martyr*

• 7.30am—Orthros and Divine Liturgy

2021 SUNDAY SCHOOL CLASSES FOR ALL AGES

(A free voluntary program organised by the Church)

Lessons take place in the building behind the church and begin at 10.30am until Church dismissal.

We have classes for ages ranging from 5yrs to teenage years. Lessons are taught in a relaxed, friendly environment. Please bring your children along to learn of their rich Orthodox faith and come close to God and His Love.

SUNDAY 28 NOVEMBER

GOSPEL READING: Luke 18: 18-27

EPISTLE READING: Ephesians 2: 4-10

“We should lead the Spiritual life, be obedient to our Spiritual Father, confess, take Communion regularly, and, most important of all, avoid criticising other people. We should read Spiritual books and Scripture, the Psalter, and take part in beneficial Spiritual discussions... We need to persist in Prayer and obedience. We have to struggle.”

Saint Iakovos Tsalikis

The Entrance of the Theotokos into the Temple

Metropolitan of Pisidia Sotirios

On the 21st of November, the Church celebrates a special Feast of the Blessed Virgin Mary, her going to the Temple of Jerusalem. As we know from Holy Tradition, her parents Saints Joachim and Anna were elderly and beyond child bearing years. After many prayers, God blessed them with a daughter, after which they dedicated her to God. They named her Mary, and when she was three years old they brought her to the Temple of Jerusalem, the original having been built by King Solomon. The young Mary was received into the temple community by the Priest Zacharias (the father of St. John the Baptist, and a relative). It is in this sacred atmosphere of the Temple that the pure daughter Mary grew up, listening to hymns, Old Testament readings, and was in constant communion with God through prayer. These years in the Temple were her spiritual preparation for what was to come later: Fulfilling God's plan to bring into the world our Saviour Jesus Christ.

When Saints Joachim and Anna brought their daughter to the temple, little did they know that she would grow up to claim the highest honour that could ever be given, becoming the Mother of the Son of God! As Christians, we are grateful for the sacrifice they made, in giving up the happiness of having their lovely daughter at home. They did not think to keep her near them in any way, as would be expected of elderly parents to have their children to care for them. They joyfully and wilfully dedicated their daughter to God, with absolute confidence that He, in His Fatherly love, would provide for them all. They are a good example for Christian parents. Parents should bond their children with God and His Church from the very beginning. To guide the little ones to the Church in loving it, to the Divine Liturgy and participation in the Sacred Mysteries. In this way, they will be ensured a blessed life. This constant communication with God will help the children grow, developing their skills and talents to advance in life. With the power and blessing of God, they will be delivered from the temptations and traps of the Evil One and his followers.

Another shining example that the holy parents of the Theotokos provide, is what to do when a child has a calling to dedicate themselves fully to God as a monastic or priest. Parents can learn from their example, because it often happens that Orthodox parents resist when their child expresses the desire to become a monk or nun. They are afraid to “lose” their child. This can be the first reaction of a mother. Yet St. Anna had no such thoughts about little Mary, even though she was alone and had only received her child after many years of prayer. Both she and her husband did not hesitate to take their daughter by the hand and send her to the Temple. When it comes to children who choose this path, who knows what level of holiness will be reached, or how many people will be helped by their example or word to find the salvation of their souls!

“I honour those who honour Me” (1 Kings 2:30) said the Lord. The Most Holy Mother of God was praised by Him, she who glorified God by her obedience and wholehearted dedication to Christ! She was honoured, and honoured not only as the most glorious ..

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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.

human being who ever lived, but higher than the Holy Angels: “More Honourable than the Cherubim and beyond compare, more glorious than the Seraphim!” God honours and glorifies others as well, depending on their degree of devotion to God and His Church.

With the glorious hymns of this Feast, Our Church puts forward the deeper theological meaning of the Virgin Mary’s Entry into the Temple: “Today, the most pure temple of the Saviour, the precious bridal chamber and Virgin, the sacred treasure of God, enters the house of the Lord, bringing the grace of the Divine Spirit. The Angels of God praise her. She is the heavenly tabernacle.” (Kontakion of the Feast).

She is the vessel of the Son of God, bringing Christ the Saviour into our world. This is why our Church commemorates this event early in the Nativity Fast leading up to Christmas Day. It is in anticipation of this supreme event, the coming of the Redeemer and Saviour to the world, Jesus Christ. Source: pemptousia.com

Feast of the Holy Great Martyr and Most Wise Katherine of Alexandria

Katherine was the daughter of Cestus, a wealthy patrician of Alexandria, the capital of Egypt and metropolis of the arts and sciences. She was widely admired not only for her noble birth but also for the exceeding beauty and intelligence that God had given her. Taught by the best masters and most illustrious philosophers, she learnt while still a girl to follow complex lines of argument and obtained a perfect understanding of the philosophical systems of Plato, Aristotle and their followers. She also excelled in the literary sphere, was familiar with the works of all the great poets from Homer to Virgil and was capable of discussing every subject, in a variety of languages learned from scholars and foreign visitors to the great city.

In her quest for knowledge, she had made herself acquainted with all the physical sciences, especially medicine, and there was no area of human wisdom beyond the range of her penetrating intellect. By the time she was eighteen, even the most learned scholars were in awe of her intellectual accomplishments. All this, combined with noble birth, beauty and wealth, made her an enviable match and there were suitors in plenty for her hand. But having a presentiment of the excellence of virginity, Katherine refused them all and made it a condition with her parents that she would accept none but a youth who equalled her in nobility, riches, beauty and wisdom.

Her mother, in despair of finding such a one, sent her to seek the advice of a holy Christian ascetic who lived not far from the city. He told Katherine that he did indeed know a man such as she was looking for, and possessed of that surpassing wisdom which is the very source and spring of all things visible and invisible—wisdom neither gained nor appropriated, but his eternal possession. He is noble also above all that we can think of, for He has authority over the whole universe and has made the world by his own power. Master of the worlds, principle of all wisdom and of all knowledge, He is also, the Elder told her, the most beautiful of the children of men (Psalm 44:3), for He is God incarnate: Son and eternal Word of the Father, who became man for our salvation and who desires to espouse every virginal soul. As he bade her farewell, the ascetic gave her an icon of the Mother of God carrying the divine Child in her arms. That night the Mother of God appeared to Katherine, but Christ turned away and would not look at her, saying that she was ugly and unclean because she was still subject to sin and death. Grief-stricken, she went back to the ascetic who instructed her in the mysteries of the faith and gave her new birth unto eternal life in the waters of Baptism. Then the Holy Virgin appeared to Katherine again with Christ in her arms, who said to His Mother with joy, “Now I will accept her as my most pure bride for she has become radiant and fair, rich and truly wise!” In token and pledge of this heavenly betrothal, the Mother of God put a ring upon the finger of the maiden and caused her to promise to take no other spouse upon the earth.

Now in those days the Emperor Maximin (305-311), like Diocletian before him, tried to make all his subjects show their submission to his power by offering idolatrous sacrifices under pain of torture and death. When these impious rites were taking place in Alexandria, Katherine appeared before him in the temple and declared her allegiance, but severely reproved the idolatrous ceremonies. Struck by her beauty as much as by her boldness, the Emperor listened as she developed her argument, and he was overcome by her wisdom. Accepting her offer to engage the foremost scholars and orators of the Empire in public disputation, Maximin sent heralds all over the Roman world to bring together scholars, philosophers, orators and logicians. There arrived at Alexandria fifty in all, who presented themselves before the Emperor and the crowd that gathered in the amphitheatre, to confront the slender young girl. Alone, but radiant with the grace of the Holy Spirit, she was in no fear of them, having been assured by the Archangel Michael in a vision that the Lord would speak through her mouth and cause her to overcome the wisdom of the world by the Wisdom that comes from on high. In that strength, Katherine showed up the errors and contradictions of oracles, poets and philosophers. She showed how they had recognized for themselves that the so-called gods of the pagans are demons and the expression of human passions. She even referred in support of her arguments to certain oracles of Sibyl and Apollo, which dimly tell of the divine Incarnation and life-giving Passion of the Son of God. Overthrowing their myths and fables, she proclaimed the creation of the world out of nothing by the one, true, eternal God, and the deliverance of man from death by the Incarnation of the only Son of the Father.

Having run out of arguments, the fifty orators were reduced to silence. Recognizing their error, they asked the Saint for Baptism, to the fury of the Emperor, who condemned them to be burnt alive on November 17. Finding Katherine immune to flattery, Maximin had her tortured and thrown in to prison, while a dreadful instrument of torture was constructed of four spiked wheels connected by an axle. Katherine was attached to this machine as soon as it was ready, but an angel came to free her and the death-dealing chariot hurtled down the slope killing many pagans on its way.

Seeing the feats of the holy Martyr, Maximin’s own wife was converted and visited Katherine in prison, escorted by the commander Porphyrius, a close friend of the Emperor, and by 200 soldiers, all of whom became disciples of Christ. Katherine received them with joy and foretold that they would soon bear away the crown of valiant athletes of the faith. The Emperor was enraged at such defiance within his household. Forgetful of all human feeling, he had his own wife cruelly tortured and beheaded on November 23. On the following day Porphyrius and his company were put to death. On November 25, Katherine was brought forth from her dungeon to appear at the tribunal, fairer and more radiant with heavenly joy than when she had entered it, for she saw that the day of her union with Christ had come at last. She was taken outside the city and, after a last prayer of thanksgiving to the Lord who had revealed to her the inexhaustible treasures of true wisdom, she was beheaded in her turn.

Her body was then conveyed by two angels from Alexandria to Mount Sinai. There, it was discovered in the eighth century by an ascetic who lived in the vicinity. The precious relic was later transferred to the Monastery that the Emperor Justinian had founded in the late sixth century. It is there to this day, giving forth a heavenly scent and working countless miracles.

Adapted from The Synaxarion: The Lives of the Saints of the Orthodox Church, Vol. 2, compiled by Hieromonk Makarios of Simonos Petra