

## Fr. Alexander Schmemmann's Words of Thanksgiving

Everyone capable of thanksgiving is capable of salvation and eternal joy.

Thank You, O Lord, for having accepted this Eucharist, which we offered to the Holy Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and which filled our hearts with the joy, peace and righteousness of the Holy Spirit.

Thank You, O Lord, for having revealed Yourself unto us and given us the foretaste of Your Kingdom.

Thank You, O Lord, for having united us to one another in serving You and Your Holy Church.

Thank You, O Lord, for having helped us to overcome all difficulties, tensions, passions, temptations and restored peace, mutual love and joy in sharing the communion of the Holy Spirit.

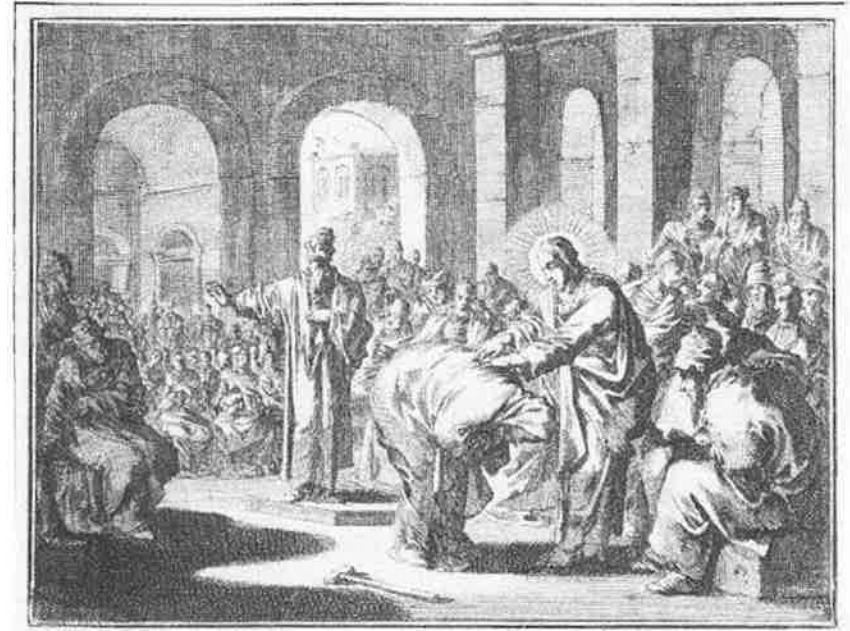
Thank You, O Lord, for the sufferings You bestowed upon us, for they are purifying us from selfishness and reminding us of the "one thing needed;" Your eternal Kingdom.

Thank You, O Lord, for having given us this country where we are free to worship You.

Thank You, O Lord, for our families: husbands, wives and, especially, children who teach us how to celebrate Your holy Name in joy, movement and holy noise.

*Thank You, O Lord, for everyone and everything. Great are You, O Lord, and marvelous are Your deeds, and no word is sufficient to celebrate Your miracles. Lord, it is good to be here! Amen!*

*"Let us Attend!"*



*"But when Jesus saw her, He called her to Him and said to her,  
"Woman, you are loosed from your infirmity ..."*

A PARISH BULLETIN OF  
ALL SAINTS ORTHODOX CHURCH

Olyphant, Pennsylvania

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24 November 2024

**22<sup>nd</sup> Sunday after Pentecost**

## Bulletin, Sunday, 24 November 2024

22nd SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST — Tone

5. Afterfeast of the Entry Into the Temple. Great Martyr

Catherine of Alexandria (305–313). Great Martyr Mercurius

of Cæsarea in Cappadocia (3rd c.). Martyr Merkúry of

Smolensk (1238). Ven. Mercurius, Faster, of the Kiev Caves

(Far Caves—14th c.). Empress Augusta, Porphyrius the

General, the 50 philosophers and the 200 Soldiers martyred

with the Great Martyr Catherine (305–313). Virgin Mastridia of

Alexandria. Ven. Simon, Abbot of Soiga Monastery

(Vologdá—1562).

**Epistle:** Galatians 6:11-18; **Gospel:** Luke 13:10-17

*Our souls and minds are strengthened and fortified by the regular reading of the Holy Scriptures. Daily readings can be found on the parish's wall calendar, or online by visiting the OCA's daily reading page <https://www.oca.org/readings>.*

### **Schedule**

– **Today: Annual Meeting Following Divine Liturgy followed by Agape Coffee Hour Fellowship.**

– **Wednesday, 27 November 2024. 9:00M Great Molieben of Thanksgiving .**

– **Saturday, 30 November 2024. 5:00–5:45PM. Fr. Paul available for Confession ; 6PM Great Vespers.**

– **Sunday, 1 December 2024, 23<sup>rd</sup> Sunday After Pentecost.**

**9:30AM Divine Liturgy, Followed by Agape Coffee Hour Fellowship.**

### Announcements

~ A warm welcome to all our visitors. Please join us downstairs for Agape Coffee Hour Fellowship.

~ Our parish will hold its Annual Parish Meeting following the Divine Liturgy.

~ We are presently receiving collections for our annual Christmas Drive for families in need at Mid-Valley High School. Please be generous, as half of the families of Mid-Valley school district live below the poverty line. If you desire to make a contribution please indicate “Christmas Drive” on a giving envelope.

~ Our congratulations to Subdeacon Joseph and Helen Semon on the occasion of their 46<sup>th</sup> wedding Anniversary. May God grant you many blessed years.

~ One of the true marks of an Orthodox Christian is the possession of genuine gratitude for the blessings that we have received from God – both those we understand and those we come to understand over time. Let us follow the words of St. Paul this week to “in all things give thanks”.

*Orthodox Faith in a Multicultural Society*

**M**ulticulturalism has radically changed the face of many countries throughout the Western world, with immigration introducing many foreign religions into societies that were previously monolithic in religious tradition. Many countries in Western Europe and North America are now seeing the spread of Orthodoxy as never before, along with the introduction of Islam. This, together with the spread of secularism and atheism, has changed the religious map of many countries.

These changes have made the practice of our faith more difficult, since Western societies no longer culturally support the open practice of Christianity. No longer do we see the expression of Christianity in the public forum, except in Orthodox countries. Many people experience pressure to keep their faith private so as not to offend others by being “too religious.” With pluralism dominant in the workplace and social settings, any display of our faith can be frowned upon.

This may work for some, but for a serious Orthodox Christian, this is problematic. How do we live Orthodoxy as our faith demands if we live it in a vacuum, shutting it off as a private practice only on Sundays? If we are truly to “put on Christ” and be transformed by the healing resources that are available to one who lives a committed Orthodox faith, we cannot allow ourselves to live Orthodoxy Lite.

We must be bold in our faith. As a monk who wears monastic garb everywhere, I can tell you it has a powerful impact on people. Even when sitting among friends who are not religious, I always bless my food. If I see a police car or fire truck pass by in downtown Seattle, I raise my hand in blessing. I wear a cross around my neck not only because I am a priest, but also because I am a believer.

I am not afraid to be public about my faith in Jesus Christ, for my faith demands it of me. Christ told His disciples that if they denied Him before men, so too would He deny them before His Father. Orthodox Christianity cries out to be lived publicly. Our very salvation demands it!

*Don't Hide Your Faith*

**I**t has been my experience that many individuals who deny the importance of religion in their lives have simply been turned off to religiosity. They've seen a form of Christianity that is disingenuous and have therefore discounted Christianity altogether. Others see Christians as judgmental and self-righteous and are therefore turned off by any religious expression.

What to do?! First, we must not hide our faith under any circumstances. This does not mean we are preachy or self-righteous. A Christian who is grateful for the Faith is also compassionate toward those who have no faith. Giving a loving witness to Christ while following the dictates of our Orthodox traditions is a good starting point.

If we are seated at the dinner table with unbelievers, for example, it is important that we not be showy about our faith, but also important that we not hide the fact that we are Orthodox Christians. Making a simple sign of the cross over ourselves before we eat not only expresses our gratitude toward God for our food, but also gives quiet witness to our willingness to live our lives in open love of our Savior. The Lord said if we deny Him before men, He will deny us before the Father. Keeping the traditions of our faith, staying true to the fast periods, and making an effort to attend Liturgy weekly is absolutely necessary if we are to grow spiritually.

Most important, our dedication to our faith and a willingness to give witness to our love of Christ can have a huge impact on those around us. If our love of the Savior translates into love of family and neighbor, those around us will see that our God is real and that our Orthodox faith is truly a way of life—one that transforms our nature. When people see that we are filled with joyous living and not judging others, they in turn want what we have. The pearl of great price can be theirs as well.

*Thanksgiving*

It has become the practice in America for many Orthodox Christians to gather in our temples for the celebration of the Divine Liturgy on Thanksgiving Day, for what better way to give thanks to God than to celebrate the sacrament whose very name, Eucharist, means "thanksgiving." As we gather with friends and family, sharing in the traditional turkey dinner, we remember that this great country has set aside Thanksgiving Day, not as a day to overeat, but as a day when we come together as family.

The central service in the Orthodox Church is the Divine Liturgy, and since the word *liturgy* means "the work of the people," the centrality of this service is all the more important, for it involves us all in a most intimate way. The people of God, who make up the Body of Christ, come together to celebrate the Eucharist and receive the very Body and Blood of our Savior. Christ condescended to take on our flesh and condescends, again, to unite Himself to His creation in each celebration of the Divine Liturgy.

The Eucharist, by its very nature, is a meal of unity whereby we leave our isolated lives and come together around the table of the Lord. We are mystically joining in the heavenly banquet that is ongoing and celebrated in the heavenly realm. This celebration of the Divine Liturgy it is not an isolated event, but a meal of unity.

We Orthodox, perhaps more than most, understand the profound importance of coming together as one. We come together to celebrate the Liturgy, which is the work of the people, giving thanks to the Lord for yet another year of blessings.

*Taking Orthodoxy beyond the Self-Congratulatory*

Archbishop Averky of Syracuse of blessed memory once said of converts, "They are like envelopes; they have a tendency to come unglued." Many converts give themselves over to a zealotry that is without temperance. In their excitement at having found "the True Faith," they almost overnight take on external formulas that make them feel they are on the fast track to sainthood.

They notice when another parishioner seems careless in making the sign of the cross, so they demonstrate for all around them the proper way. They make a production of the fast periods, making sure their non-Orthodox family and friends know the seriousness of fasting. Their icon corners can be larger than that of the pious old woman who has been Orthodox all her life.

These people become spiritual gluttons; they take their newfound faith into a place of sensuality and pride that is miles from the holiness that comes from years of struggle. In their newness to Orthodoxy, they throw themselves into the externals and public displays, while preventing themselves from entering into the mystery of faith that comes only with the acquisition of a humble and contrite heart.

Our longing for drama and excitement can lead to spiritual pride rather than the holiness that comes with humbly receiving the faith by following the example of holy people. If our Orthodoxy is expressed primarily in the externals, we become followers of the Pharisee rather than imitators of the humble publican.

My spiritual father, Archimandrite Dimitry of blessed memory, gave me the best of advice when he said, "Little by little." Taking little steps, with the guidance and direction of one's priest or spiritual father or that pious little old lady whose face radiates the light of Christ, we will be able to enter into the Kingdom, having gained the humility and joy that do not necessitate being extravagant with the externals.

SUNDAY

Thirteenth Sunday of Luke  
Abstain from meat and dairy products.

NOVEMBER 24

Galatians 6:11-18  
Luke 18:18-27

The best way to defeat the devil is by patience. As long as we endure and do not take revenge, the spirit of peace calms us. To the degree that we pray for our enemies and take all the blame on ourselves, we will feel great peace in our souls. And if our thoughts tell us that "so-and-so is also to blame and not just me," and this thought conquers us, then the Holy Spirit leaves us, we begin to feel heaviness in our souls, and we can't endure anymore.

*Elder Proclu of Romania †*

**MARTYRS FLORA AND MARIA OF CORDOBA.** There were nine Christian female martyrs in ninth-century Cordoba, Spain. Flora and Maria were the first two to confess their Christian faith before the Muslim judge, and they were imprisoned and then beheaded. Their bodies were left in the open for a day and then thrown into the river. Their example inspired other Christians to become martyrs.



**COMMEMORATIONS:** Hermogenes, Bishop of Agrigentum; Clement, Pope of Rome; Peter, Archbishop of Alexandria; Gregory, founder of the monastery of the Golden Rock in Pontus; Alexander at Corinth; Theodore of Antioch; Mastridia of Alexandria; Mercurius of Smolensk; Mercurius of the Kiev Caves; Mercurius the Faster of the Far Caves; Luke, steward of the Kiev Caves; Simon, founder of Soiga Monastery (Vologda); Chrysogonos at Aquileia; Mark of Trigleia; Malchus of Chalcis in Syria; Martyrs Philoumenos, Christopher, Eugene, Procopius, and Christopher; Righteous Carion; Nikodemos the Younger of Philokalos Monastery in Thessalonica; Protasius of Auvergne (Gaul); Romanus of Bordeaux; Portianus of Arthone (Gaul); Flora and Maria of Cordoba; (Last Sunday in November: Synaxis of the Achaean Saints; Synaxis of the Saints of Agia).

MONDAY

St. Katherine the Great Martyr  
Abstain from meat and dairy products.

NOVEMBER 25

Galatians 3:23-4:5  
Mark 5:24-34

Whether we go to Paradise or to hell doesn't depend on if we have a lot of or a little money, but on the way we use the money we have. Money, possessions, and all material goods are not our own, but God's. We simply are responsible for the way in which they will be used. We must know that God will ask an account from us for every last cent, whether or not we used it according to His will.

*St. Porphyrios of Kavsokalyvia*

**VENERABLE PETER OF GALATIA.** Peter lived by the Black Sea with his pious parents until the age of nine. He went to Jerusalem to venerate the holy places, and then he lived the life of an ascetic in Galatia and Palestine. He chose to go to Antioch to be with those who shared his commitment and zeal for the faith and enclosed himself in a cave. Peter devoted himself to prayer and strict abstinence, living on bread and water every other day, and he carefully guarded his thoughts. God granted him the gift of wonderworking, healing the sick, and expelling demons. Through his prayers and the Sign of the Cross, he healed the blind and cured a woman with breast cancer. He became renowned throughout Antioch. St. Peter died peacefully in 429 at the age of ninety-nine.



**COMMEMORATIONS:** Mercurius of Caesarea; Katherine of Alexandria with 50 rhetoricians, Augusta, Porphyrius, and 200 soldiers; Moses of Rome; Peter of Alexandria; Peter the Silent; Seraphim of Smolensk; 670 martyrs beheaded; Clement of Ochrid, Bishop of Greater Macedonia.

## NOVEMBER 26

1 Thessalonians 1:6-10  
Luke 19:45-48

Of course, it would be easier to get to paradise with a full stomach, all snuggled up in a soft feather-bed, but what is required is to carry one's cross along the way, for the kingdom of God is not attained by enduring one or two troubles, but many!

*St. Anthony of Optina*

**ST. SOPHIANOS, BISHOP OF DRYINOUPOLIS.** Sophianos is considered a precursor of St. Kosmas the Aitolos. Kosmas began his ministry by opening 200 schools, churches, and charities about ninety years after the times of Sophianos during the Turkish occupation of Greece. Sophianos became Bishop of Dryinoupolis, now present-day southwest Albania, where the area's religious composition was changing away from Christianity. In 1672 he founded a Greek school in the monastery of St. Athanasios, and he resigned his bishopric to become a wandering missionary, preaching from village to village, as did Kosmas. Because of his pious character, Sophianos was respected by Christians and non-Christians alike. There was a story about a Muslim girl who lost her fez that was embroidered with gold coins, and she implored Sophianos to help her find it. After fervent prayer, it was revealed to him that the fez was in the nest of a stork, and she found it there. Another time, an unbelieving traveler expressed disbelief about the truth of a miracle story that a monk had told him. Sophianos ordered a young monk to retrieve three burned pieces of cherry wood from the fireplace. He then planted them and told the traveler they would bloom and bear fruit in the spring in order to prove that the miracle he heard was true. The burned cherry wood did bloom.



**COMMEMORATIONS:** Innocent of Irkutsk; James the Solitary of Syria; Stylianos of Paphlagonia; Alypios the Stylite of Adrianople; Peter, Patriarch of Jerusalem; Silas of Persidos; Acacius of Mt. Latros, who is mentioned in *The Ladder*; George of Chios; Sophianos of Dryinoupolis; Athanasius and Theodosius of Cherepovets; Nikon Metanoieite of Armenia; Tikhon of Donskoy; Consecration of the Church of St. George in Kyparission.

## NOVEMBER 27

1 Thessalonians 2:1-8  
Luke 20:1-8

Every drop of kindness has a ripple effect. You never know how far reaching each ripple might be.

*St. Joseph the Hesychast*

**VENERABLE THEODOSIUS OF TURNOVO.** After the death of his abbot, Theodosius went from monastery to monastery for a long time in search of a spiritual guide. At last, he found St. Gregory of Sinai, an experienced guide of the hesychastic life at the monastery of Paroria. But this monastery often suffered from robbers. Gregory sent Theodosios to Emperor Alexander with a request to defend the monastery. The emperor provided the means to surround the monastery with strong walls, and he also gave the monastery land and cattle. During another errand, Theodosius encountered a nobleman who asked to be taken to the monastery. This nobleman was Romanos, who later became a disciple of Theodosius. After Gregory died, Theodosius refused to become the next abbot, so he and Romanos visited many places in search of a spiritual harbor. Finally, they founded a monastery near Turnovo, and soon a large brotherhood of various nationalities gathered around them. Theodosius became a zealous defender of Orthodoxy against many heresies, such as the Bogomils, who did not use the Christian cross or build churches since they revered their bodies to be a temple. The heretical Judaizers regarded the Levitical laws of the Old Testament as still binding on all Christians. And finally, the heresy of the Messalians, who rejected the sacramental life of the Church. When St. Theodosius died, a beautiful fragrance filled his cell.



**COMMEMORATIONS:** Pinuphrius of Egypt; James the Persian; James of Rostov; 17 Monk-martyrs in India; Theodosius of Turnovo; Diodorus of George Hill; Palladius of Thessalonica; Palladius of Elenopolis; Nathaniel of Nitria; Akakios and Damaskinos the Studite; Maurice of Rome, and his 6 sons; Andrew Ogorodnikov; Nicholas of Vladimir; Nikon of the Staro-Golutvin; Joasaph of Nikolskoye; Nicholas of Peshnosha; Apollos of Moscow; Cronides, Seraphim, and Xenophont of St. Sergius; Virgil of Salzburg; Congar of Somerset; Fergus of Glamis; Maximus of Riez.

*'But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ'*  
(Eph. 4:7).

Here is the beginning of differentiation among Christians. The Apostle first set down that which unites us: 'One Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all'. Now he cites that which separates us quite involuntarily. That is: the measure of the gift of Christ separates us, the measure according to which the grace of the Holy Spirit is given. Christ is the Head of the great body that is called the Church. He creates that body, and differentiates every member of that body; He is the Creator, and He alone knows the blueprint. He does not allow one part of His building to be disproportionately great or small; He gives the measure of each and all. Thus, He gives to one five talents, to another two and to another one. Let no-one grumble and no-one be jealous. Let no-one grumble: he who has received the less will have the less to answer for. Let no-one be jealous: whatever any man has more, it is not his but God's. If he has much, much will be asked of him, as the Lord Himself said when talking about the talents.

Oh, my brethren, let every one of us be conscious of the measure of our gift and our responsibility, for they are all gifts of and from God.

O Lord Jesus, Thou great Giver of divers gifts, to Thee be glory and praise for ever. Amen.

### **1. The Holy and Great Martyr Katharine.**

The daughter of King Constus, she lived with her mother in Alexandria after her father's death. Her mother was secretly a Christian and, through her spiritual father, brought Katharine to the Christian faith. In a vision, St Katharine received a ring from the Lord Jesus Himself as a sign of her betrothal to Him. This ring remains on her finger to this day. Katharine was greatly gifted by God, exceptionally well-educated in Greek philosophy, medicine, rhetoric and logic, and added great physical beauty to this. When the wicked Emperor Maxentius offered sacrifice to idols and ordered everyone to do the same, St Katharine came with daring before him and denounced his idolatrous errors. The Emperor, seeing that she surpassed him in wisdom and learning, summoned fifty of the wisest men, to dispute with her about faith and put her to shame, but Katharine was wiser than they, and put them to shame. The furious Emperor commanded that all fifty wise men be burned. These wise men, at St Katharine's prayers, all confessed the name of Christ at the moment of death, and proclaimed themselves Christians. When the martyr was in prison, she brought Porphyrius the general, with two hundred of his soldiers, to the Faith, and also the Empress, Augusta-Vasilissa. They all suffered for Christ. At St Katharine's martyrdom, an angel of God appeared to her, stopping and breaking the wheel on which she was being tortured, and after that the Lord Christ Himself appeared to her, strengthening her. After many tortures, Katharine was beheaded with the sword at the age of eighteen, on November 24th, 310. Milk flowed from her body in place of blood. Her wonderworking relics are preserved on Sinai.

### **2. The Holy and Great Martyr Mercurius.**

When the Emperor Decius was once making war on the barbarians, there was in the army the commander of an Armenian regiment called the Martesians. This commander was called Mercurius. In the battle, an angel of God appeared to Mercurius, put a sword in

his hand and told him that he would overcome the enemy. Mercurius displayed a wonderful courage, mowing the enemy down like grass with his sword. After this glorious victory, the Emperor made him supreme commander of his army, but some jealous men denounced him to the Emperor as a Christian. Mercurius did not deny this before the Emperor, but openly acknowledged it. He was most terribly tortured: cut with knives in strips and burned in a furnace, but an angel of God appeared in the prison and healed him. Finally the Emperor pronounced the sentence that General Mercurius be beheaded with the sword in Cappadocia. When they beheaded him, his body became as white as snow, and from it there arose a wonderful, incense-like fragrance. Many of the sick were healed by his wonderworking relics. This glorious soldier of Christ suffered for the Faith some time between 251 and 259.

### 3. The Holy Maiden Mastridia.

She lived in Alexandria and led a solitary life of prayer and hand-work. A young man became consumed with lustful passion towards her, and pestered her incessantly. Determined not to sin against God, and seeing that it would not be easy to shake off this dissolute youth, St Mastridia once asked him what it was in her that most attracted him. He replied: 'Your eyes!', and Mastridia took the needle with which she was sewing and put out her eyes. Thus she preserved her own peace and the young man's soul, who repented deeply and became a monk.

Author's note: This Mastridia is apparently not the same as the one who is commemorated on February 7th. The latter is from Jerusalem, while this one is from Alexandria. The latter fled from scandal to the desert, and this one put out her eyes.

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### FOR CONSIDERATION

A tale of the elder Barlaam to Joasaph: In a certain town there was a local custom, namely the choosing of a stranger who did not know

their laws and customs as king. When they had crowned him king, they arrayed him in exquisite and costly robes, fed him sumptuously and surrounded him with every luxury. When a year had passed, they deposed their king, stripped him of all his goods and his royal robes and drove him, completely naked, off to a distant island, where he had neither bread nor roof nor companionship, and where, in want and abasement, he would end his days. The citizens would then choose another king, also a stranger and also for only a year, then a third, then a fourth and so on. It came to pass at one time that they chose a very wise and prudent man. He discovered from his servants what happened to the king of the town at the end of a year and therefore, during the course of the year, zealously collected food and goods and all sorts of everyday necessities together on the island. When the year had passed, and he was stripped naked and cast onto the island, he found himself in the midst of an enormous quantity of food, silver, gold and precious stones, and continued to live there in an even better way than he had as king of the town. The interpretation is this: the town represents the world; the inhabitants represent the evil spirits; the foolish and wise kings are men. The foolish think only of their comfort in this life, counting it eternal and losing all in the end in death, going naked of all good works to hell. The wise, on the contrary, do many good works that they then send, like goods, into the other world to await them there, and where they reign in greater splendour and beauty than they did on earth.

### TO PONDER

Let me ponder on the wondrous creation of the world (Genesis 1):

1. How God brought all the cattle, birds and wild beasts before Adam, to see how he would name them.
2. How Adam named every living thing, both cattle and birds and beasts.

### HOMILY

— on Him who both descended and ascended.