

## Life of St. Philaret the Almsgiver

Philaret was from the village of Amnia in Paphlagonia. Early in life, Philaret was a very wealthy man, but by distributing abundant alms to the poor he himself became extremely poor. However, he was not afraid of poverty, but continued his charitable works with hope in God, Who said: Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy (Matthew 5:7). Once, while he was plowing in the field, a man came to him and complained that one of his oxen had died in the harness and that he was unable to plow with only one ox. Philaret then unharnessed one of his oxen and gave it to him. He even gave his remaining horse to a man who was summoned to go to war. He gave away the calf of his last cow, and when he saw how the cow pined for her missing calf, and the calf for the cow, he called the man and gave him the cow too. And thus the aged Philaret was left without food in an empty house. But he prayed to God and placed his hope in Him. And God did not abandon the righteous one to be put to shame in his hope. According to the custom of that time, the empress Irene sent men throughout the whole empire to seek the best and most distinguished maiden to whom she could wed her son, the emperor. By God's providence, these men happened to stay overnight in Philaret's house, and they saw his most beautiful and modest granddaughter Maria, the daughter of his daughter Hypatia, and took her to Constantinople. The emperor was well pleased with her, married her, and moved Philaret and all his family to the capital, giving him great honors and riches. Philaret did not become proud as a result of this unexpected good fortune, but, thankful to God, he continued to perform good works even more than he had before, and thus he continued until his death. This righteous man entered into rest in the year 797 A.D.

*“Let us Attend!”*



*“When he heard this, he went way sorrowful for he was very rich ...”*

A PARISH BULLETIN OF  
ALL SAINTS ORTHODOX CHURCH

Olyphant, Pennsylvania

Rev. Paul J. Witek, Ph.D., Rector

201.315.5722

1 December 2024

**23rd Sunday after Pentecost**

## Bulletin, Sunday, 1 December 2024

**23rd SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST — Tone 6. Venerable Botolph of Iken (7th c.).** Prophet Nahum (7th c. B.C.). Righteous Philaret the Almsgiver of Amnia in Asia Minor (792). Martyr Ananias of Persia.

**Epistle:** Ephesians 2:4–10 **Gospel:** Luke 18:18–27

*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.o.ca.org/readings>.*

### **Schedule**

- **Wednesday, 4 December 2024. 9:00M Akathist to St. Nicholas the Wonderworker.**
- **Friday, 6 December 2024. 120<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of St. Nicholas Parish. 9:30AM Joint Hierarchical Liturgy at St. Nicholas.**
- **Saturday, 7 December 2024. 5:00–5:45PM. Fr. Paul available for Confession; 6PM Great Vespers.**
- **Sunday, 8 December 2024, 24<sup>th</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.

~ 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 Sister Parish of St. Nicholas will celebrate its Paternal Feast Day and 120<sup>th</sup> Anniversary this Friday, 6 December 2024. His Grace, Archbishop Mark will preside at the Hierarchical Liturgy at 9:30AM. Let us join our brothers and sisters at St. Nicholas in celebrating this milestone in their parish life.

~ Our Thanks to all those that have come together to make pierogi for the Nativity Season. May the Lord richly bless you for your labors. Many blessed years.

~ Today we commemorate St. Philaret the Almsgiver, who was known for his sacrificial giving to those in need. Please read his life on the back of the Bulletin. During this season of the Nativity Fast let us use the opportunity to not only enter into deeper prayer and engage in fasting, but also increase our care for those in need, for it is at this time of year that need is most felt.

*When God Seems Absent*

We all have moments when we feel as though God is absent—or even nonexistent. Those times leave us feeling alone and abandoned, as though we were lost in an empty stadium. Or we feel as though we were on a boat that has been set adrift without an engine, floating further from shore and heading to an uncertain future.

Such occasions are not unlike those early days, while we were toddlers, when Mom would hold our hands while Dad reached out to us, just feet away, urging us to take our first step. We were not in any danger, but we certainly didn't feel that way as we felt Mom's hands separate from ours. We felt fearful, vulnerable. We felt as though we were going to fall, yet Dad's arms were reaching out, offering the security we'd always had, yet encouraging us to stand on our own, taking the first steps into independence.

God is like that with us. Those periods when He seems distant—or even seems to be a fictional being—are moments when He is actually closer to us than our own breath. These are the moments when God is drawing us out of ourselves and into communion with Him. His outstretched arms are there, even though we don't see them. These moments strengthen us and enable us to have a mature relationship with God, not unlike the mature relationship a child develops with her parents after taking those first steps alone.

*How to Be a Pious—Not Proudful—Orthodox Christian*

I once noticed a young man standing in the front of the temple during Liturgy, making profound bows, together with frequent, almost exaggerated, signs of the cross. My first thought was that he must be a newly baptized Orthodox Christian; after embracing Orthodoxy, many people fall into the trap of exaggerated piety. I do not mean to diminish the importance of external piety or making the cross properly; liturgical correctness has its place. We just need to be careful to remember that our piety is not meant to be displayed before others.

I once knew a monk who always stood in the back of his monastery's catholicon, avoiding any public display whatsoever. He told me the temptation to be seen as a pious and holy monk was too strong. I am not suggesting everyone stand in the back of the church, lest everyone be doing battle for those few spots on a crowded Sunday morning. What I am suggesting is that we remember we are there for worship.

If you become aware that your motives for standing in front of others during worship arise out of pride, by all means move to the back. It is the Lord who should see us, and to Him our pious external acts of worship should give honor. Externals are meant to be an aid to worship, bringing our bodies into conformity with our hearts. We must guard the heart, making sure the externals are not temptations for pride.

The way to make sure our piety takes us deep into true worship is to express these external acts of worship in the privacy of our homes. Private Orthodox worship, expressed by standing before our icons, making the sign of the cross with care, and doing prostrations, instructs the heart in true worship. If we've established a true relationship with the Lord in our home, what we express in the temple publicly will be authentic.

### *Let Christ Increase While You Decrease*

**A**s we enter into the holiday season, our stress level tends to increase, leading to conflict. Worries about finances, interactions with certain family members who are not usually a part of our everyday lives, and holiday shopping and cooking obligations can lead to increased tension between members of families. Husbands and wives can find themselves arguing about petty things, children can become disobedient, and family arguments can overwhelm the peace that should reign during the holy season of the fast and the Nativity celebrations.

Sometimes one little remark of a visiting relative can open old wounds, leading to a family argument. Adult children can find themselves acting like angry teenagers, with one critical word leading to a meltdown and ruining a family dinner.

During the holiday season, you need to be vigilant, guarding your words and keeping your emotions under control. This season should be a time when you work harder at keeping the peace, guarding your heart, and letting Christ rule your words and thoughts. Don't let the celebration of the birth of our Savior be trampled upon by your ego. Make sure Christ is glorified in your speech, your actions, and your thoughts. Make this season one in which you treat all your family members, friends, and coworkers with extra respect and love.

May we let Christ increase in our hearts as we make ourselves decrease.

### *Do Not Let the Sun Go Down on Your Anger*

*Anger is by nature designed for waging war with the demons and for struggling with every kind of sinful pleasure. Therefore angels, arousing spiritual pleasure in us and giving us to taste its blessedness, incline us to direct our anger against the demons. But the demons, enticing us towards worldly lusts, make us use anger to fight with men, which is against nature, so that the mind, thus stupefied and darkened, should become a traitor to virtues.*

Abba Evagrius the Monk

**W**hile getting into my car in a parking lot, I overheard someone taking God's name in vain. I saw that he was angry that he'd dropped something, and then I realized I knew him. He was a self-declared Christian who would have been horrified had he realized I'd overheard him. How sad I felt that he'd given himself over to the passion of anger to such an extent that he took the Lord's name in vain—the very Lord whose name he bears. There are many nonbelievers who guard their words better than many who profess Christ. The Fathers tell us that whenever anyone takes God's name in vain, the ramifications reverberate throughout the entire cosmos. However insignificant we think our secret sins may be, they affect the whole of God's universe. Redemption is not just about us but about the whole of the universe. My salvation and your salvation are connected.

St. Seraphim of Sarov said, "We must bear offenses from others with equanimity and accustom ourselves to such a disposition of spirit that these offenses seem to concern not us, but others. Such a practice can give quietness to the human heart and make it a dwelling for God Himself." And Abba Nilus said, "Prayer is the seed of gentleness and the absence of anger."

During this Nativity Fast, let us not only abstain from non-fasting foods, but let us more importantly abstain from all anger. If we truly are of Christ, we have the means to change, for it is because we have Christ in us that victory over the passions can be ours.

SATURDAY

Holy Apostle Andrew the First-Called  
Abstain from meat and dairy products.

1 Corinthians 4:9-16  
John 1:35-51

# NOVEMBER 30

Those who do not have Christ in them are full of anxiety. But when man grasps the deepest meaning of life, then all his anxiety goes away and the divine consolation comes and heals. And when a man is freed from stress then all kinds of people rest near him. Do not worry about anything. Anxiety is the devil. When you see anxiety, know that it's the devil's work. When we feel anxious in our struggle, let us know that we are not moving in the space of God. God is not a tyrant to drown us.

*St. Paisios the Athonite*

**ST. ALEXANDER, BISHOP OF METHYMNA.** Very little is known about St. Alexander. He was perhaps the first Bishop of Methymna and took part in the First Ecumenical Council in 325. It is said that he founded a monastic community near the village of Lafiona, on Lesbos. He was known for the sweetness of his teaching. In the service chanted on the feast day of Saint Alexander, he is praised for putting to flight the heretics and for leading his flock in purity and grace. His holy relic proved to be a healer of suffering.



**COMMEMORATIONS:** Apostle Andrew the First-Called; Alexander, Bishop of Methymna; Frumentios of Abyssinia; Peter I and Samuel I, Catholicoses of Georgia; Vakhtang Gorgasali of Georgia; Tudwal of Treguier; Andrew of Transylvania; Simeon of Belgrade; Elias of Valaam.

SUNDAY

Fourteenth Sunday of Luke  
Abstain from meat and dairy products.

Ephesians 2:4-10  
Luke 18:35-43

# DECEMBER I

Let us look to ourselves and be sober, brothers. Who will give us back this present time if we waste it? If we actually had to seek these days, we would not have found them. Abba Arsenius was always saying to himself, "Arsenius, what have you come for?" We are in such a negligent and ruinous condition that we don't know why we have come; we don't know even what we want and, therefore, we make no progress, but we are always distressed. This comes about because we have no set purpose in our hearts and actually if we were to resolve to fight a little, in a short time we should not find life distressing or laborious. For if from the beginning a man does violence to himself and struggles with himself a little in a short time he makes progress and afterwards he goes on peacefully, when God seeing that he does violence to himself, brings him help. We must, then, do ourselves violence. Let us lay down a good foundation, let us meanwhile desire what is good.

*St. Dorotheos of Gaza*

**MARTYR ANANIAS THE PERSIAN.** Ananias was from the city of Arbel in Persia. He was arrested for believing in Christ and subjected to horrible and ongoing tortures. Just as Ananias was about to die, he said, "I see a ladder which reaches to heaven. I see some young men, radiant, with light, who are inviting me, saying, 'Come with us; and we shall bring thee inside a city filled with light and ineffable rejoicing.'" As soon as St. Ananias said these words, he reposed.



**COMMEMORATIONS:** Prophet Nahum; Onesimus of Ephesus; Ananias and Solochonus of Ephesus; Philaretos the Merciful of Amnea; Anthony the New of Kios; Ananias of Persia; Theokletos, Archbishop of Lacedaemon; Iligius of Noyon; Tudwal of Lan Pabu; Innocent Letyaev of Kharkov and Akhtyra; Leontius, Bishop of Fréjus; Translation of the relics of St. Botolph of Ikanhoe, England.

MONDAY

Abstain from meat and dairy products.

# DECEMBER 2

1 Thessalonians 2:20-3:8  
Luke 20:27-44

To uproot sin and the evil that is so imbedded in our sinning can be done only by divine power, for it is impossible and outside man's competence to uproot sin. To struggle, yes, to continue to fight, to inflict blows, and to receive setbacks is in your power. To uproot, however, belongs to God alone. If you could have done it on your own, what would have been the need for the coming of the Lord? For just as an eye cannot see without light, nor can one speak without a tongue, nor hear without ears, nor walk without feet, nor carry on works without hands, so you cannot be saved without Jesus nor enter into the kingdom of heaven.

*St. Macarius the Great*

## VENERABLE ATHANASIUS THE RECLUSE OF THE KIEV CAVES.

At one point, Athanasius no longer wished to be a part of the vanity and delights of this world and went to live as an ascetic in the Far Caves of the Kiev Caves Lavra in Ukraine. He shut himself up in a cave in order to please God in silence. It is said that Athanasius did not need candles since a heavenly light shone for him, as was also the case for St. Nicholas Planas. St. Athanasius was granted the gift of healing that Orthodox Christians received through his intercessions to God.



**COMMEMORATIONS:** Prophet Habakkuk (Abbacum); John, Heracleon, Andrew, and Theophilus, of Egypt; Solomon of Ephesus; Cyril of Philea; Stephen-Urosh V, King of Serbia and his mother Helen; Jesse of Tsilkani in Georgia; Athanasius "the Resurrected," recluse of the Kiev Caves; Athanasius, recluse of the Kiev Caves; Myrope of Chios; Habibus the New of Edessa; Abbakum of Cyprus; Joannicius of Devic (Serbia); Viviana of Rome; Chromatius, Bishop of Aquileia; Danax Kalashnikov of Arkhangelskoye and Cosmas Magda of Milyatino (Moscow); Porphyrios of Kavsokalyvia and Kallisa; *Gerontissa* Icon of the Mother of God.

TUESDAY

Abstain from meat and dairy products.

# DECEMBER 3

1 Thessalonians 3:8-13  
Luke 21:12-19

Know how to converse—to interrogate without over-earnestness; to answer without desire of display; not to interrupt a profitable speaker, nor to desire ambitiously to put in a word of one's own; to be measured in speaking and hearing; not to be ashamed of receiving information, or to be grudging in giving it; nor to disown what one has learned from others... One should reflect first what one is going to say and then say it. Be courteous when addressed, amiable in social exchanges; not aiming to be pleasant by smartness but cultivating gentleness in kind admonitions. Harshness is ever to be put aside, even in censuring.

*St. Basil the Great*

**ST. SOLA, ANGLO-SAXON MISSIONARY.** Sola was an Englishman who followed St. Boniface into Germany. Boniface ordained him to the priesthood and advised him to retire into the wilderness, where he lived as a hermit. After the martyrdom of St. Boniface, Sola would be visited by Bishop Willibald and the priest Wunebald for spiritual conversation. Sola, who was dead to all honors and applause, was once granted a large parcel of land by King Charles, but he transferred it to another monastery. Many people sought his guidance, and those who stayed on with him became monastics, so he founded the monastery at Soinhofen. After St. Sola's death in 790, his body was enshrined by the authority of Pope Gregory IV in the ninth century.



**COMMEMORATIONS:** Prophet Zephaniah; John the Silent of St. Sava's Monastery; Theodore, Patriarch of Alexandria; Theodoulos of Constantinople; Theodoulos of Cyprus; Angelos of Chios; Cosmas of St. Anne's Skete; Martyrs Mamas, Seleucus, and Agapius; Gabriel II, Patriarch of Constantinople; Sabbas Storozhevsky of Zvenigorod; Gregory of Cherniksk; Nicetius of Lyons; George of Cernica and Caldarusani; Birinus of Dorchester; Sola, Anglo-Saxon missionary; Lucius, King of Britain; Hilarion Grigorovich of Krutitsa.

## DECEMBER 1st

### 1. The Holy Prophet Nahum.

Born of the tribe of Simeon in a place called Elkosh, on the further side of the Jordan, he lived seven hundred years before Christ and foretold the fall of Nineveh two hundred years after the Prophet Jonah. The people of Nineveh had repented after hearing Jonah's preaching, and God had protected them and not destroyed them. But, with the passage of time, they came to forget God's mercy and turned again to evil. Nahum foretold their doom, warning them that, if they showed no repentance, they would receive no protection. The entire city was so utterly destroyed by earthquake, flood and fire that its location is no longer known. Holy Nahum lived for forty-five years before going to his rest in the Lord, leaving us a small book of his true and genuine prophecies.

### 2. St Philaret the Merciful.

From the village of Amnia in Paphlagonia, Philaret was at first a man of some substance, but, as a result of his constant almsgiving, he became utterly destitute. He was not afraid of poverty, and went on with his charitable works with trust in the Lord who has said: 'Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy', paying no attention to the disapproval of his wife and children. Once, when he was ploughing in his meadow, a man came to him with the news of the death of his ox in harness, and of his inability to plough with only one ox, so Philaret unharnessed his own and gave it to him. He gave away his remaining horse to a man who was called away to battle, and the calf from his remaining cow — and, when he saw how the cow pined after her calf, gave the man the cow as well. And so the aged Philaret was left hungry in an empty house. But he prayed to God, entrusting himself to Him. God does not abandon the righteous man, allowing him to be shamed in his hope. At that time, the Empress Irene was on the throne with her young son Constantine and, in accordance with the custom of the time, the Empress sent men through the whole Empire to find the best and most distinguished maiden to wed her son. By divine Providence, these men

happened upon Philaret's home and beheld his very beautiful and modest grand-daughter Maria, the daughter of Hypatia, and they took her to Constantinople. The Emperor was well-pleased with her and took her to wife, and brought Philaret and all his family to the capital, showering honour and wealth upon them. Philaret did not become proud in this change of fortune but, with gratitude to God, performed still greater deeds of charity than before, remaining thus for the rest of his days. At the age of ninety, he called all his children to him and, having blessed them and instructed them to cleave to God and His Law, foretold to each of them how their lives would develop, just as our forefather Jacob did aforetime. When he had done this, he went to a monastery and there gave his soul into God's hands. At his death, his face shone like the sun and a sweet fragrance arose from his body, and miracles were worked over his relics. This righteous man of God went to his rest in 797. His wife and all his children and grandchildren lived and died in the Lord.

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## FOR CONSIDERATION

Virtue is like a thirst. When a man begins to drink, he becomes yet more thirsty and seeks to drink more and more often. Whoever begins to practise the virtue of compassion knows and acknowledges no limit. St Philaret was no less generous in poverty than he was in wealth. When his grand-daughter became Empress, he became a rich man once again, and not a wit less generous. One day, he told his wife and children to prepare the most lavish feast they could, and said: 'Let us invite our King and Lord and all His great men to our feast'. Everyone thought that the old man meant to invite his son-in-law, the Emperor, and so they worked especially hard to prepare the feast. However, Philaret went around the streets and gathered all the poor, the wretched, the despised, the lame and the enfeebled, and brought them to the feast. He sat them down at table and told his wife and sons to serve them. At the end of the feast, he gave each guest a gold coin. Then everyone

understood that by 'the King', he meant the Lord Christ Himself, and by the 'great men', the poor and helpless. He used to say that one must not decide beforehand what money to give to the poor, but to give whatever was in the hand when it came out of one's pocket, for the hand would find whatever God in His providence had given.

### TO PONDER

Let me ponder on Adam and Eve's fall into sin (Genesis 3):

1. How Eve did not repent when she sinned, but hastened to make her husband share in her sin.
2. How Adam did not repent when he sinned, but tried to justify himself by accusing his wife.
3. How many sinners today look for others to share in their sin, and accuse others in order to justify themselves.

### HOMILY

— on the creation of the world.

*'In the beginning God created  
the heaven and the earth'*  
(Gen. 1:1).

God's answer comes to us through the lips of the prophet: the answer for which we all hunger, the answer to the question: 'Whence comes this world?' God hears our question, whether we voice it or not; He hears and answers. As rain is to parched ground, as health is to a sick man, as food and clothing is to the body, so is the answer to this question. The question creates hunger and thirst and pain and nakedness for every man, but he is then fed and clothed and given drink and health by this truthful answer. The question is 'Whence comes this world?' The answer is: 'In the beginning, God created the heaven and the earth.' This world did not create itself, as nothing in it has ever created itself. This world

is not the work of an evil power, nor the work of many creators, good and evil, but is the work of the one, gracious God. This answer evokes joy in the heart of every man and moves him to good deeds. And we know that this is the one, true answer. Every other answer, in contradiction to this, evokes anguish and fear in us and moves us to evil works, and we therefore know that such an answer is false. The world comes from God, my brethren, therefore rejoice and be glad! The world is divine in its origin, and therefore its end shall also be in God. The world is well-rooted, and will therefore bring forth good fruit. It has come forth from a chamber of light and will therefore end in light. When we know that the beginning is good, then we know that it tends towards good and that its end will be good. Lo, in the words about the beginning there is already hidden a prophecy about the end. As is the beginning, so will be the end. The end will be found in Him Who made the beginning. Let us cherish this truth, the bearer of our salvation; let us have a luminous hope and let us grow strong in love of Him who for love created us.

O Lord God, the Creator and Sustainer of all things, our only God, our only Creator, the good Fount of all goodness, we worship Thee and entreat Thee: guide us by Thy Holy Spirit towards this good end, through the Lord Jesus Christ. To Thee be glory and praise for ever. Amen.