

St. John the Baptist Orthodox Church

Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America Diocese of Los Angeles and the West

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July 23, 2017



On July 23 in the Holy Orthodox Church, we commemorate the recovery of the precious relics of the holy Hieromartyr Phocas, Bishop of Sinope.

Phocas exercised himself in all the Christian virtues from his youth. As bishop in his birthplace, the town of Sinope on the shores of the Black Sea, he strengthened the faith of the true believers by his example and divine words and converted many idol-worshippers to the true Faith. The hard-hearted pagans were filled with rage against holy Phocas. Through a vision granted him by the Lord, he foresaw his martyrdom for Christ: Phocas saw a white dove fly down from heaven carrying a beautiful wreath of flowers in its beak, and lowered the wreath onto his head. He was not afraid, but with gratitude toward God prepared himself for suffering. A certain prince, Africanus, took Phocas for interrogation, and subjected him to harsh tortures, and after a time of imprisonment threw him into boiling water, where this

brave soldier of Christ ended his earthly life and settled in the joy of his Lord. Phocas suffered during the reign of Emperor Trajan in 102.

On this day, we also commemorate the Hieromartyrs Apollinaris and Vitalis, bishops of Ravenna; Martyr Apollonius of Rome; and the Holy Prophet Ezekiel. By the intercessions of Thy Saints, O Christ God, have mercy upon us. Amen.

Holy Prophet Ezekiel

The Holy Prophet Ezekiel lived in the sixth century before the birth of Christ. He was born in the city of Sarir, and descended from the tribe of Levi; he was a priest and the son of the priest Buzi. Ezekiel was led off to Babylon when he was twenty-five years old together with King Jechoniah II and many other Jews during the second invasion of Jerusalem by the Babylonian king Nebuchadnessar.

The Prophet Ezekiel lived in captivity by the River Chebar. When he was thirty years old, he had a vision of the future of the Hebrew nation and of all mankind. The prophet beheld a shining cloud, with fire flashing continually, and in the midst of the fire, gleaming bronze. He also saw four living

creatures in the shape of men, but with four faces (Ez. 1:6). Each had the face of a man in front, the face of a lion on the right, the face of an ox on the left, and the face of an eagle at the back (Ez. 1:10). There was a wheel on the earth beside each creature, and the rim of each wheel was full of eyes.

Over the heads of the creatures there seemed to be a firmament, shining like crystal. Above the firmament was the likeness of a throne, like glittering sapphire in appearance. Above this throne was the likeness of a human form, and around Him was a rainbow (Ez. 1:4-28).

According to the explanation of the Fathers of the Church, the human likeness upon the sapphire throne prefigures the Incarnation of the Son of God from the Most Holy Virgin Mary, who is the living Throne of God. The four creatures are symbols of the four Evangelists: a man (St Matthew), a lion (St Mark), an ox (St Luke), and an eagle (St John); the wheel with the many eyes is meant to suggest the sharing of light with all the nations of the earth. During this vision the holy prophet fell down upon the ground out of fear, but the voice of God commanded him to get up. He was told that the Lord was sending him to preach to the nation of Israel. This was the beginning of Ezekiel's prophetic service.

The Prophet Ezekiel announces to the people of Israel, held captive in Babel, the tribulations it would face for not remaining faithful to God. The prophet also proclaimed a better time for his fellow-countrymen, and he predicted their return from Babylon, and the restoration of the Jerusalem Temple.

There are two significant elements in the vision of the prophet: the vision of the temple of the Lord, full of glory (Ez. 44:1-10); and the bones in the valley, to which the Spirit of God gave new life (Ez. 37:1-14). The vision of the temple was a mysterious prefiguring of the race of man freed from the working of the Enemy and the building up of the Church of Christ through the redemptive act of the Son of God, incarnate of the Most Holy Theotokos. Ezekiel's description of the shut gate of the sanctuary, through which the Lord God would enter (Ez. 44: 2), is a prophecy of the Virgin giving birth to Christ, yet remaining a virgin. The vision of the dry bones prefigured the universal resurrection of the dead, and the new eternal life bestowed by the Lord Jesus Christ.

The holy Prophet Ezekiel received from the Lord the gift of wonderworking. He, like the Prophet Moses, divided the waters of the river Chebar, and the Hebrews crossed to the opposite shore, escaping the pursuing Chaldeans. During a time of famine the prophet asked God for an increase of food for the hungry.

Ezekiel was condemned to execution because he denounced a certain Hebrew prince for idolatry. Bound to wild horses, he was torn to pieces. Pious Hebrews gathered up the torn body of the prophet and buried it upon Maur Field, in the tomb of Sim and Arthaxad, forefathers of Abraham, not far from Baghdad. The prophecy of Ezekiel is found in the book named for him, and is included in the Old Testament.

St Demetrius of Rostov (October 28 and September 21) explains to believers the following concepts in the book of the Prophet Ezekiel: if a righteous man turns from righteousness to sin, he shall die for his sin, and his righteousness will not be remembered. If a sinner repents, and keeps God's commandments, he will not die. His former sins will not be held against him, because now he follows the path of righteousness (Ez. 3:20; 18:21-24).

WISDOM OF THE FATHERS

St. Paisios responds to the question: ‘Geronta, how is love for God increased?’ - “By keeping your mind constantly on God, by thinking of God. Invoke the Jesus Prayer, speak with God. When a person practices this, he will - at first - sense a little bit of love for God. Later, as he advances, he will feel it all the more. His mind, in time, is permanently fixed on God, and he is no longer moved by anything earthly or vain. Ablaze with the love of God, his heart is filled and he doesn’t want to think of anything else except God. No longer interested in any worldly matters, he thinks constantly of the Heavenly Father. You see, those involved with inventions and discoveries are deeply absorbed in their study. However, how deeply are we absorbed by Christ?”

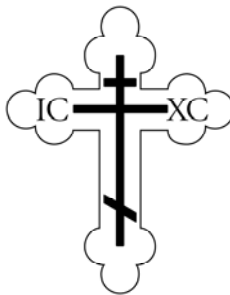
On Confession - “When we show our wounds to the doctor, we mention our pains, our troubling, our illnesses without hiding anything, thus also in confession. We strip our soul, we reveal our wounds, we confess our illness and our personal pain. If this does not occur, we will remain unhealed. Our wounds will grow, the pollution and rotting will advance, the illness will continue undermining our being and sooner or later will lead us to death.” *Archimandrite Nektarios Antonopoulos*

St. Nikolai: A man went into the forest to choose a tree...

A man went into the forest to choose a tree from which to make roof-beams. And he saw two trees, one beside the other. One was smooth and tall, but had rotted away inside, and the other was rough on the outside and ugly, but its core was healthy. The man sighed, and said to himself: “What use is this tree to me if it is rotten inside and useless for beams? The other it is rough and ugly, is at least healthy on the inside and so, if I put a bit more effort into it, I can use it for roof-beams for my house.” And, without thinking any more about it, he chose that tree.

So will God choose between two men for His house, and will choose not the one who appears outwardly righteous, but the one whose heart is filled with God’s healthy righteousness.

+ *St. Nikolai Velimirovich*



RESURRECTIONAL APOLYTIKION IN TONE SIX

When Mary stood at Thy grave, looking for Thy sacred body, angelic powers shone above Thy revered tomb; and the soldiers who were to keep guard became as dead men. Thou led Hades captive and wast not tempted thereby. Thou didst meet the Virgin and didst give life to the world, O Thou, Who art risen from the dead, O Lord, glory to Thee.

KONTAKION FOR ORDINARY SUNDAYS IN TONE TWO (CHANT) (CHORAL)

O protection of Christians that cannot be put to shame, mediation unto the Creator most constant, O despise not the suppliant voices of those who have sinned; but be thou quick, O good one, to come unto our aid, who in faith cry unto thee: Hasten to intercession, and speed thou to make supplication, thou who dost ever protect, O Theotokos, them that honor thee.

THE EPISTLE

O Lord, save Thy people, and bless Thine inheritance.

Until Thee will I cry, O Lord my God.

The Reading from the Epistle of St. Paul to the Romans. (15:1-7)

Brethren, we who are strong ought to bear with the failings of the weak, and not to please ourselves; let each of us please his neighbor for his good, to edify him. For Christ did not please himself; but, as it is written, "The reproaches of those who reproached thee fell on me." For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that by steadfastness and by the encouragement of the scriptures, we might have hope. May the God of steadfastness and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus, so that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Welcome one another, therefore, as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God.

THE GOSPEL

The Reading from the Holy Gospel according to St. Matthew. (9:27-35)

At that time, as Jesus passed on from there, two blind men followed him, crying aloud: "Have mercy on us, Son of David." When He entered the house, the blind men came to Him; and Jesus said to them, "Do you believe that I am able to do this?" They said to Him, "Yes, Lord." Then He touched their eyes, saying, "According to your faith be it done to you." And their eyes were opened. And Jesus sternly charged them, "See that no one knows it." But they went away and spread His fame through all that district. As they were going away, behold, a dumb demoniac was brought to Him. And when the demon had been cast out, the dumb man spoke; and the crowds marveled, saying, "Never was anything like this seen in Israel." But the Pharisees said, "He casts out demons by the prince of demons." And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every disease and every infirmity.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Camp St. Mary of Egypt – Thank You! – Thank you and many blessed years to all the campers, staff, and clergy of Camp St. Mary for another fantastic year of camp! It was an amazing week full of fun, teaching, games, prayers, great food, worship, crafts, music, and above all Love! Safe travels to all those traveling home today, and may God bless all of you until Camp St. Mary 2018!



Moving Help Needed – Jenny Dancy is in need of some help moving some items from a storage unit in Post Falls to her apartment in CDA. If you have a pickup or van and could possibly help, please contact Jenny at 208-640-8596.



Men's Retreat - August 4 – 6, All-Merciful Saviour Monastery, Vashon Island

Join us for the St. Katherine's Men's Retreat this Aug 4-6. Abbot Tryphon, host of the Morning Offering podcast has agreed to lead the retreat at the All-Merciful Saviour Monastery.

Michael McKinley (servant of the Lord, Nicodemus) is facilitating this retreat as part of his seminary requirements for the St. Stephen's course. Other parishes are more than welcome! Please consider attending and inviting any men 15

years or over for what should be a very joyful, challenging and prayerful weekend!

Cost: \$75, Food: 3 meals a day are included, Lodging: You may camp at the monastery for free or stay at one of the nearby Bed and Breakfasts on the island. Carpooling is encouraged.

Please RSVP to Michael McKinley no later than July 1, 2017. Space is limited.
mikemck21@gmail.com | 208.669.8420 | <http://vashonmonks.com>

Icons of the Theotokos Booklet Now Available

A beautiful little booklet has been published explaining the history, origin of each of the icons of the Theotokos in the Narthex. Copies of the booklet are available for a \$5 donation to the St. John's Benevolence fund. If you would like a copy, please see Jeane Wood or Joy Corey.



Miraculous &
Wonderworking Icons
of the Theotokos

SAINT JOHN THE BAPTIST ORTHODOX CHURCH
POST FALLS, IDAHO

SCHEDULE OF SERVICES & EVENTS

Saturday, July 22: Great Vespers 6:00pm

Sunday, July 23: Orthros 9:00am, Divine Liturgy 10:00am, Lunch Following

Wednesday, July 26: Vespers 6:00pm

Friday, June 28: Spiritual Circle 9:30am

Saturday, July 29: Great Vespers 6:00pm

Sunday, July 30: Orthros 9:00am, Divine Liturgy 10:00am, Lunch Following

EPISTLE READERS

July 23 Andrew Schaefer

Aug 6 Joy Corey

July 30 Reader Sebastian Horton

Aug 13 David Gencarella

LUNCH TEAM

July 23 Team 5: Barbara Garbinski, Justin & Mackenzie Knoles, Shirley Touros, Tilda Caldaroni, Jenny Dancy

July 30 Team 4: Kelly Peterson, Sandford family, Deacon Joseph and Susan Manion & Foster Caldaro

Aug 6 Team 1: Schaefer family, Gallatin family, Ebert family & the Phillips family.

Aug 13 Team 2: Victoria Purviance, Dale Ayoub & the Bardwell family

CLEANING ROTATION (nave, narthex, hallway and upstairs restrooms)

Week of 7/23 Dn. Joseph & Susan Mannion

Week of 8/6 Fr. Basil

Week of 7/30 Joy Corey

Week of 1/3 Jeanne Rickert

PRAYERS FOR THE LIVING: Suzy and her son Conner (friends of Jenny Dancy), Jordan Marrujo, Karen Karres, Cindy (Tiffani Gallatin's mother), Deborah Lynn Blair (Shawna King's mother), Josh Gallatin, Steve Wood, Sbdcn. Athanasios Schumacher, Helen Odell, Metropolitan Paul Yazigi and Metropolitan Youhanna Ibrahim (hostages in Syria), Suffering Christians throughout the Middle East

PRAYERS FOR THE DEPARTED: Victims of Abortion, Departed Christians in Syria, Iraq and Egypt who have died for their Faith.



A Note Regarding Holy Communion

Since we understand Communion to mean that we have all things in common, sharing an identical Faith, only those who are members of the Orthodox Church who have prepared themselves through prayer, fasting and recent confession may participate in Holy Communion. (We invite all, however, to partake of the blessed bread which is distributed at the dismissal.) Please see the pastor for inquiries on how to become a member.