

# ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST ORTHODOX CHURCH

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

SEPTEMBER 12, 2021



# St. John the Baptist Orthodox Church

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

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**September 12, 2021**

## LEAVE-TAKING OF FEAST OF NATIVITY OF THE THEOTOKOS

On September 12 in the Holy Orthodox Church, we take leave of the celebration of the Nativity of the Most-holy Theotokos, and we commemorate the precious staves and contest of the holy Hieromartyr Autonomos, bishop from Italy, who was slain in Bithynia.

*As a sacrifice set upon Thine altar, O Savior, is Autonomos Thy sacrificer, slain by stoning.  
On the twelfth Autonomos was beaten to death with staves and stones.*

In Soreoi, Autonomos brought many to the Christian faith and built them a church dedicated to the Archangel Michael. Not far away was a place called Limnae, entirely inhabited by pagans. Autonomos went to this place and quickly brought many of them to the light by the Gospel of Christ. This roused the other pagans, and they hurried to Archangel Michael Church and, during divine service, slew Autonomos on the altar, killing also many other Christians in the church. Two hundred years after his death, Autonomos appeared to a soldier called John. This soldier dug up the saint's relics and found them to be completely uncorrupt, and many of the sick received healing from them.

On this day, we also commemorate the Hieromartyr Coronatos of Iconium; and Venerable Daniel of Thasios.

*By the intercessions of Thy Saints, O Christ God, have mercy upon us.  
Amen.*



### **RESURRECTIONAL APOLYTIKION IN TONE THREE**

Let the heavens rejoice and the earth be glad, for the Lord hath done a mighty act with His own arm. He hath trampled down death by death, and become the first-born from the dead. He hath delivered us from the depths of Hades, granting the world the Great Mercy.

### **APOLYTIKION OF THE NATIVITY OF THE THEOTOKOS IN TONE FOUR**

Thy nativity, O Theotokos, hath proclaimed joy to the whole universe; for from thee did shine forth the Sun of justice, Christ our God, annulling the curse, and bestowing the blessing, abolishing death and granting us life everlasting.

### **KONTAKION OF THE NATIVITY OF THE THEOTOKOS IN TONE FOUR**

By thy holy nativity, O pure one, Joachim and Anna were delivered from the reproach of barrenness; and Adam and Eve were delivered from the corruption of death; thy people do celebrate it, having been saved from the stain of iniquity, crying unto thee: The barren doth give birth to the Theotokos, who nourisheth our life.

### **THE EPISTLE**

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

*Unto Thee, O Lord, will I cry, O my God.*

### **The Reading from the Epistle of St. Paul to the Galatians. (6:11-18)**

Brethren, see how large a letter I have written to you with my own hand. As many as desire to make a fair show in the flesh, they compel you to be circumcised, only that they may not be persecuted for the Cross of Christ. For not even those who are circumcised do themselves keep the Law; but they desire to have you circumcised, that they may boast in your flesh. But God forbid that I should boast, except in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through Whom the world is crucified to me, and I to the world. For in Christ Jesus, neither circumcision counts for anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation. And as many as walk according to this rule, peace be upon them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God. Henceforth, let no one trouble me; for I bear in my body the brand-marks of the Lord Jesus. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brethren. Amen.

### **THE GOSPEL**

### **The Reading from the Holy Gospel according to St. John. (3:13-17)**

The Lord said, "No one has ascended into heaven but He who descended from heaven, the Son of man. And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of man be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life. For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life. For God sent His Son into the world, not to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through Him."

## WISDOM

*Glory to God for All Things*, “The Perpetual Catechumen”, Fr. Stephen Freeman

It should not surprise us to learn that we are often creatures of the culture in which we live. We understand this, particularly when we travel and encounter people whose culture differs profoundly from our own. What seems obvious to us, might seem obscure to them. What we eat, how we shop, what counts as polite, what is rude, all of these are shaped by culture. In truth, this is just the tip of the iceberg. We do not enter the world as a blank slate, nor do we reach the so-called “age of discretion” without already having acquired a wide range of thoughts, beliefs, tendencies, etc. We are constantly being formed and shaped by our environment. At some point in our lives, our will gains strength and begins to play a contributing role in our life. However, we discover, if we pay attention, that the will is always confronting an “uneven playing field.”

This insight traditionally plays a role in the Church’s understanding of the catechumenate, that process by which we initiate persons into the life of the Orthodox faith. In early centuries, that process of preparation lasted as much as three years. Surprisingly, it consisted primarily in “moral instruction” (teachings on how to behave). Instruction in the doctrines of the faith did not take place until after Baptism! The assumption behind this was (and still should be) that catechumens needed spiritual formation before they were ready to receive doctrinal instruction. This assumption has been greatly weakened in our modern culture.

We labor under the myth of being an “information-based” society. We imagine that we are deeply informed, have ready access to massive amounts of information on the basis of which we are able to make free and well-considered decisions. This oversimplification of our human experience is deeply flawed. Among the things we’ve learned in the past year-and-a-half is that “distance education” doesn’t work very well. There’s a good reason for that: education is not merely about the acquisition of information. Interaction with a computer screen is insufficient. We are social beings and require the presence and direct interaction with others in order to learn well and fully. Our mistake about all of this could be compared to imagining that infants merely need milk and not touch, cuddling, cooing, and the human face. We know the result of such mistaken notions: babies die, suffering from “failure to thrive.”

Catechumens, if given only a diet of information, also fail to thrive. Above all else, it is the practice of the faith that makes faith possible.

Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, “If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.” (Jn. 8:31-32)

“Abiding in the word” (keeping the commandments, engaging in the practices of the faith) is the necessary pre-condition for “knowing the truth.”

One manifestation of this with which many believers are familiar is the “coin drop.” Any amount of information may have passed our ears and eyes. The Scriptures, the Liturgy, various hymns and writings, all of them bathe us in their wisdom while we remain inert, untouched, and even bored. And yet, there can come a moment when the “coin drops.” A single phrase can catch our attention and understanding takes place – sometimes with wonderful joy and delight. These great moments of grace point towards something that has taken place in the heart. Hours, weeks, even years, standing in the services, fasting and failing, confessing and struggling, all work as a plow on the hardened soil of the heart. So much seed had fallen by the wayside or on the rocks and disappeared. But then, a single seed finds fertile ground and its grace fills the soul.

Such moments are not just worth the wait, they point towards the essence of the faith and the true nature of its work. We are not saved by information. We are saved by the Word working richly in our hearts transforming us. A single such word can save.

This suggests to me that we set our minds to become “perpetual catechumens” in which we give our attention to the softening of our hearts rather than inundation of our minds. It raises the significant question, “What is it that softens my heart?” That goes to the very root of repentance. I think it may vary from heart to heart. I have seen the admonition, for example, that, before prayer, we read something that softens the heart. It is difficult to go directly from the busyness of our lives straight into the Holy of Holies. There is a need to “wash and be clean,” and to “clothe ourselves with the garment of salvation.” For some, no doubt, singing or listening to holy music can be a preparation. If we pay attention, we will find such things around us. Use them.

The heart’s learning is the true point of salvation. Information does not save us – but there is such a thing as “saving knowledge.” We speak of this, formally, as “holy illumination.” It is the consistent teaching of the Church that holy illumination is our desired path to God. It is God’s gift (I can’t write a book and say, “Here, read this, and you’ll be illumined”). It is absolutely the case that God desires for us to be illumined. It calls for us to “purify” our hearts.

And the coins do drop. Bless God, O how they drop!

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

**Sisterhood Dues:** It is that time of year again for the Sisterhood to send in our dues to the diocese. The dues money is used for many benevolent projects. You may give me your dues of \$10. Each parish is expected to send their dues to the diocese by November 1. Thank you! Barbara Garbinski, Treasurer

**Wanted! An experienced metal worker:** to repair the bell clapper in our large bell outside the Temple. Please contact Fr. Mark or Fr. Nicholas if you, or someone you know, is able to help.

**Baby Marina arrived Wednesday, September 1!** Meal Train for Mackenzie Knoles: We would like to cover meals to help Mackenzie and her husband during the first two weeks. Please contact Lavonne Ayoub at (208) 277-7889, or [lavonne@lavonneayoub.com](mailto:lavonne@lavonneayoub.com) to be added as a meal provider. Thank you!

**Kitchen news:** The kitchen areas are being rearranged in effort to simplify agape meals and to meet the need for a place to keep tables and chairs. Many banquet items have been moved to the shed. Please cooperate by not leaving things in the kitchen. It might help to think “pack it in, pack it out” when setting up for anything. Thank you for your help! Contact Ignatius or Mary Chapman with any questions.

**Preschool Registration Drive for Sunday School:** Supplies are now being ordered, so if you have pre-school age children, please email Jeane Wood--[plastinowood@gmail.com](mailto:plastinowood@gmail.com). (Even if you have signed up before, Jeane is asking that you email her to be sure she has everyone). If you have not had a chance to register the rest of your children, please use the sign-up sheet in the back of the Church or see Fr. Mark. Classes will be offered for everyone from preschool through 12th grade. Thank God we have over 60 signed up!

**Help needed in the Cemetery:** Anyone who wants to help with weeding, and general maintenance, please come! Thursday from 9:30am to noon. Bring your own tools, gloves, etc. See Eleni for details. Thank you!

**FREE Lumex Adult Folding Walker with Wheels.** Teresa Chala has a brand-new adult walker to give to anyone who needs it. For more information, call: (509) 475-0671.

**Snowplow for Saint Herman of Alaska and Saint Mary Magdalene Sketes:** We are raising funds for a snowplow, winter tires and cables for the skete truck. The plow is \$7,500. Anyone wishing to donate may give a check or cash while visiting the skete or send a check to Saint Herman or Saint Mary Magdalene Skete, 4810 E 6th Ave, Spokane Valley, WA 99212. Donations may also be made via PayPal on our skete website. Please let us know that your donation is intended for the plow fund. Thank you for your prayers!! With love in Christ, Saint Herman of Alaska and Saint Mary Magdalene Sketes

## **SCHEDULE OF SERVICES & EVENTS [Calendar]**

**Saturday, September 11:** Catechism 4:30pm; Great Vespers 6pm

**Sunday, September 12:** Orthros & Divine Liturgy 9am

**Monday, September 13:** Great Vespers and Orthros for the Elevation of the Cross 6pm

**Tuesday, September 14:** Divine Liturgy for the Elevation of the Cross 6am

**Wednesday, September 15:** Vespers 6pm

**Friday, September 17:** Spiritual Circle 9:30am

**Saturday, September 18:** Catechism 4:30pm; Great Vespers 6pm

**Sunday, September 19:** Orthros & Divine Liturgy 9am; Wedding of Marina Graham and David Fairbrother 4pm

**Tuesday through Thursday, September 21 – 23:** Deanery Retreat

### **EPISTLE READERS**

9/12 Riley Chapman

9/19 Reader Silouan

9/26 Rob Schannep

10/3 Aaron Plew

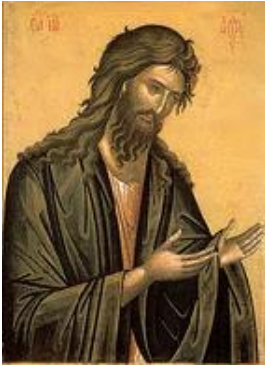
*\*If you would like to read the Epistle, please contact Aaron Plew. Sign up: **Epistle Readers***



**PRAYERS FOR THE LIVING:** Eugenia, Mary and Craig, Loren, Theo, Caitlin and Ben, Kieran and fellow soldiers, Hay family, Family of Jean Weingand, Bill Sutherland, Marian, Douglas, Weaver family, John/Steven Wood, Khouria Joanna, Korbin (friend of Alyson Gross), James & Helen Odell, those suffering with the Covid-19 virus and those caring for the sick and suffering, victims of injustice and social unrest, Metropolitans Paul and John (hostages in Syria), the suffering Christians throughout the Middle East.

**PRAYERS FOR THE DEPARTED:** Charalambos (Mary Welsh's father), Jean, Andrew, Wanda (Lavonne Ayoub's mother), Baby of Caitlin (Kh. Joanna's friend), Victims of abortion, Victims of the Covid-19 virus, Victims of injustice and social unrest, the departed Christians throughout the world who have died for the Faith.

**CONFESSIONS:** Please remember to contact Fr. Mark to schedule confessions, even if you intend to confess after the evening services. This ensures that your confession is well prepared, and that everyone can be heard in an orderly fashion. Father is available to meet at the Church Tuesday through Saturday.



### ***Troparion of St. John the Baptist***

*The memory of the just is celebrated with hymns of praise, but the Lord's testimony is enough for thee, O Forerunner. For thou wast shown to be more wonderful than the prophets since thou wast granted to baptize Him whom thou didst proclaim. Then having endured great suffering for the truth thou didst rejoice to bring even to those in hades the good tidings, that God who hast appeared in the flesh, takes away the sins of the world, and grants us great mercy.*