



Words of Wisdom

From the Saints & Teachers

Today Readings

Epistle: Hebrews 11:9-10, 17-23, 32-40
Gospel: Matthew 1:1-25

John Chrysostom, Homilies on Hebrews 25.1 [1.] GREAT indeed was the faith of Abraham. For while in the case of Abel, and of Noah, and of Enoch, there was an opposition of reasonings only, and it was necessary to go beyond human reasonings; in this case it was necessary not only to go beyond human reasonings, but to manifest also something more. For what was of God² seemed to be opposed to what was of God; and faith opposed faith, and command promise.

I mean this: He had said, "Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and I will give thee this land." (Gen. 12:1, 7.) "He gave him none inheritance in it, no not so much as to set his foot on." (Acts 7:5.) Seest thou how what was done was opposed to the promise? Again He said, "In Isaac shall thy seed be called" (Gen. 21:12), and he believed: and again He says, Sacrifice to Me this one, who was to fill all the world from his seed. Thou seest the opposition between the commands and the promise? He enjoined things that were in contradiction to the promises, and yet not even so did the righteous man stagger, nor say he had been deceived.

For you indeed, he means, could not say this, that He promised ease and gave tribulation. For in our case, the things which He promised, these also He performs. How so? "In the world" (He says), "ye shall have tribulation." (John 16:33.) "He that taketh not his cross and followeth Me, is not worthy of Me." (Matt. 10:38.) "He that hateth not his life shall not find it." (John 12:25.) And, "He that forsaketh not all that he hath, and followeth after Me, is not worthy of Me." (Luke 14:27, 33.) And again, "Ye shall be brought before rulers and kings for My sake." (Matt. 10:18.) And again, "A man's foes shall be they of his own household." (Matt. 10:36.) But the things which pertain to rest are yonder.

But with regard to Abraham, it was different. He was enjoined to do what was opposed to the promises; and yet not even so was he troubled, nor did he stagger, nor think he had been deceived. But you endure nothing except what was promised, yet you are troubled.



From The Ambvon

ST MICHAEL ORTHODOX CHURCH,
OLD FORGE, PA

Priest Michael Shepherd (frmichael@stmichaelof.org)

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27th SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST — Tone 2. Sunday before the Nativity.

Birthdays & Anniversaries for December

Birthdays:

Nameday: Barbara Sevensky (12/4); Daniel Jones (12/17);

Anniversary:

Baptism:

Travelers:

**Prospora Schedule: Please sign up to bake prospora. Open dates:
Dec**

Thank you to Savina for this week's Prospora!

Visitors: Please Stay for coffee hour that will be downstairs in the Church
Do you have a birthday or anniversary this/next week? Please add it to
our list on the shelf in the Vestibule/Narthex.

Service Attendance: Last weekend Divine Liturgy: 39

DEAR GUESTS AND FRIENDS: *A most sincere and heartfelt welcome to you from our community. According to the ancient traditions of the Orthodox Church, the Sacrament of Holy Communion is to be administered only to Orthodox Christians who have prepared to receive themselves by fasting and a recent (monthly) confession..If you have questions please ask Fr Michael!*



Service Schedule
WEEK of 19Dec-25Dec

Wed, Dec 21st: @ 11:00AM - 1:30PM Silent Prayers
 FRI, Dec 23rd: @ 9AM, Royal Hours for Nativity
 SAT, Dec 24th: @ 5:00 PM Compline, Matins with Litya for Nativity of Christ
 SUN, Dec 25th: Hours @ 9:20 AM, Divine Liturgy @ 9:30 AM

WEEK of 28Dec-01Jan

Wed, Dec 28th: @ 11:00AM - 1:30PM Silent Prayers
 SAT, Dec 31st: @ 5:00 PM Compline, Matins with Litya for Circumcision of the Lord
 SUN, Jan 1st: Hours @ 9:20 AM, Divine Liturgy @ 9:30 AM Circumcision of the Lord

UP COMING

THURS, Jan 5th: @ 5:00 PM Great Vespers Holy Theophany
 FRI, Jan 6th: Divine Liturgy @ 9:30 Holy Theophany



Announcements
& Upcoming Parish & Diocesan Events

Church Work Day: Every Friday is Church Maintenance day. Come help!
Theophany Home blessings! Yes, dear loved ones, it is that time again to bless our homes! Beginning on January 6, the Feast of Theophany, Fr. Michael will start blessing the homes of the members of our Parish, as well as businesses.
Jan 26-27 2023 Diocesan Assembly Announcement - St Nicholas, Bethlehem, PA. Matushka Emilia will be the lay delegate.

Annual All Parish Meeting - 26Feb23 after Liturgy

The Lot down the Street has been sold for \$35,000.00 and closed this past Friday. After realtor's commission the church received \$32,375.00.

Kontakion, Synaxis of Archangel Michael & all the Bodiless Hosts
 Commanders of God's armies and ministers of the divine glory, princes of the bodiless angels and guides of mankind, ask for what is good for us, and for great mercy, supreme commanders of the Bodiless Hosts.

Holy Archangel Michael Pray unto God for us!

Yearly Financial update

PEOPLES SECURITY BANK - 17DEC22

Current Balance	December Credits	December Debits
\$59,164.05	\$12,844.00	- \$4,092.39

2022 Credits: \$72,994.05
 \$32,375 selling the lot
 \$15,600 Income from rentals
 \$47,975 received from sources other than from Dues or people who Tithed
 Perogi Sales:

2022 Debits: - \$40,620.28
 Priest Salary:
 Housing/Utilities:
 Utilities:
 Office Supplies:
 Liturgical Supplies:

Cemetery Fees:

Approx.: \$15,019.05 in Donations
 We roughly have 80 members on the census.

I am still working the numbers and will update this weekly so we have accurate numbers for the Annual Parish Meeting.

EDWARD JONES - 25NOV22

Beginning Value:	\$165,345.58
Assets Added:	\$0.00
Assets Withdrawn:	\$0.00
Fees and Charges:	\$1827.33
Change In Value:	<u>\$12,807.25</u>
Current Balance:	\$150,711.00

Society of St Michael 01NOV22

Checking	\$2,826.93
Savings	\$8,384.89
12 month CD	\$6,501.71
60 month CD	<u>\$6,305.09</u>
	\$24,018.62

RBO - 01NOV22

Saving Fund	\$135,812.15
Cemetery Fund	<u>\$65,014.26</u>
	\$200,826.41

17Dec22 Total Assets: \$434,720.08

The Winter Pascha, Chapter 20: The Two Comings of Christ

The following is an excerpt from The Winter Pascha, by Fr. Thomas Hopko

During the Christmas prefeast season, the connection between the first coming of God's Son as the Suffering Servant, the Lamb of God who takes upon Himself the sins of the World, and His second coming as the triumphant King and Judge of the universe is not overtly stressed in any of the church services. But it is clearly implied in virtually all of the songs, hymns and lections. The Old Testament prophecies read at the hours, vespers and matins on the day before the Nativity quite specifically proclaim the messianic age which Jesus is born to bring, but which He will manifest in power only at the end of history. And several verses which are sung during the season directly refer to the interrelationship between the Master's two comings.

Christ our Judge commands us to be vigilant.
 We wait expectantly for His visitation,
 For He comes to be born of a Virgin.
 At Your awesome second coming, O Christ,
 Number me with the sheep at Your right hand,
 For You took up Your abode in the flesh to save us.
 At Your first coming to us, O Christ,
 You desired to save the race of Adam;
 When You come again to judge us,
 Show mercy on those who honor Your Holy Nativity.¹

The Christmas prefeast hymns, especially the canons, consciously refer to the hymns of the services of Holy Week before the springtime Pascha. In many of them, Easter paschal themes are replaced by Winter paschal themes, with just a few words being changed in each verse. Thus, what is effected at these services is a sort of "triple connection." Christ's Nativity, with His Epiphany in the Jordan, is referred to His Passion and Resurrection, which is then referred to His Coming at the end of the ages. In making the triple connection, the entire Mystery of Christ is placed before the believers for their contemplation and communion.

Christians live between the two comings of Christ. They remember His first coming to be sacrificed. They anticipate His second coming to reign. This is vividly portrayed in traditional Orthodox church buildings where the "royal gates" of the icon screen in front of the altar table are flanked by the icons of the Theotokos and Child on the one side, and the Lord Jesus in glory on the other. To the uninitiated it may seem as though these are simply pictures of Mary and Jesus put on the same level. This is not so. The icons which frame the Orthodox altar are images of the two comings of Christ. Mary is not alone in her icon; she is holding the Christ Child, who is not shown as a baby, but as the Son of God incarnate "in the form of a slave... in the likeness of men" (Phil 2:7). This is the icon of Christ's first coming. And the icon on the right of the doors is not a picture of Jesus as He was on the earth. It is His image in glory as King and Lord, the icon of His second coming.

The two comings of Christ are held together in Christian thought, action, and prayer at all times. They cannot be separated. When they are, it is the end of Christian faith, life and worship. The first coming without the second is a meaningless tragedy. The second coming without the first is an absurd impossibility. Jesus is born to bring God's kingdom. He dies to prove His kingship. He rises to establish his reign. He comes again in glory to share it with His people. In the kingdom of God there are no subjects. All rule with the risen Messiah. He came, and is coming, for this purpose alone.

1Ode 9 of the canon of compline of the second day of the prefeast of the Nativity, December 21

Royal hours

Canonical hours are a type of special, fairly brief divine offices that mark certain times of day, at which a certain important event of the Savior's earthly life occurred. There are four hours in the worship practice of the Orthodox Church, namely, the Ninth Hour, the First Hour, the Third Hour, and the Sixth Hour. The principal topic of the Ninth Hour is the death of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ on the Cross. The First Hour reminds of the expulsion of Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden, as well as the trial of the God-man at the Caiaphas' court and His Passion. The Third Hour is devoted to the Descent of

the Holy Spirit on the apostles, while the Sixth Hour reminds of the Lord's Crucifixion. The names of the hours can be traced back to Jewish customs. The ancient Jews divided the day into four parts, hence the hours' names. The tradition of fixed prayers at regular intervals dates back to the Old Testament but it acquired a new meaning in Christianity. The Ninth Hour is at 3 p.m., the First Hour is at 7 a.m., the Third Hour is at 9 a.m., and the Sixth Hour is at 12 p.m. Currently, the Hours are appended to longer services out of convenience. The Ninth Hour is appended to the Vespers, the First Hour is appended to the end of the Matins, and the Third and Sixth Hours are served before the Liturgy.

However, the worship practice of the Church includes Great Hours—alternatively referred to as Royal Hours—too. They are served on the greatest Orthodox holidays, three times a year: on Holy Friday, Christmas Eve, and Theophany Eve.

They are called Great because they are served in an especially solemn manner. A priest wears a phelonion. The Royal Door is open. The beginning of each hour is marked by censuring, with the entire church censed at the first and the final hour, with a lit candle, like during the polielei. There are paroemias (Greek, 'proverbs' — special readings from the Old Testament) read at every hour, followed by the Epistle and the Gospel readings. The Scripture readings are selected to match the holiday. Apart from that, Psalms, prokeimenons, troparions and kontakions—in fact, almost all prayers of the Great Hours—are dedicated to the celebrated event (the Nativity of Christ, the Baptism of the Lord, or the Passion of Christ).

This service is called Royal because Byzantine emperors had a habit of attending them due to their grandeur. It underlined not only spiritual and liturgical importance of these services but also their public value.

Heortologically (Greek root heortē means 'feast', thus, heortology is a branch of theology, which studies religious holidays), Christmas Eve and Epiphany Eve are twin holidays. Their liturgical structures are similar. It can be attributed to the fact that the Nativity of Christ and the Baptism of the Lord were celebrated as one holiday, called the Holy Theophany, in the past. Christmas was first celebrated as a separate holiday only in the 4th century.

Donations in Memory of

Donation in Memory of Rose Krenitsky was made to purchase all new Altar Server Vestments

In Memory Of: Peter Gyza Sr.
From: Siglinde Deak, Joel & Janelle Mendelson,
Marie Boyko, Don & Kathy Goldbach,

In Memory Of: Irene Pritchuk
From: Alexander Pritchuk, Fr David
& Sharon Shewczyk

In Memory Of: Dorothy Polanchik
From: Daria Polanchik

Christmas Flowers Donations

In Memory Of: Pregmon Family
From: Mr & Mrs Daniel Pregmon

In Memory Of: Peter Tyrpak
From: Lolita Tyrpak

In Memory Of: Walter, Sonia, Peter
Walter Tyrpak & Andrew Peregrim Family
From: Ann Tyrpak

Parish Prayer List

Please remember in your prayers LIVING

Captive Hierarchs PAUL and JOHN; Ill-afflicted Archpriests John Nightingale & Fr Theodore Orzolek

All those caring for the sick and suffering at this time throughout the world, especially our families and friends: Mike Jadick, Bernie Elko, Margaret Pregmon, Marie Buranich, Helen Wytovich, Tammy Wytovich, Rosemary Kuzmich, Sandra Pritchuk, Marie Pasternak, Sandy Batton, Paula Stavisky, Al Pritchuk, Eli Stavisky, Evelyn Bunevitch, Nadia Macheska, John Pritchuk, Paulette Ezbiansky, Andrew Lutzick, Daniel Jones, Charissa Voroziichak, Matushka Paula Soucek **Servants of God** Dcn Nathan, Mat. Katherine, Miraiyah, Evangeline, Gideon, Zacharias, Ignatius, Basil (Clausson), Mat. Emilia, Blaise, Maximus, Rodion, Savina (Shepherd), Barbara Sevensky, Bev Elko, Sandra Condon, Ann Tyrpak, Sandy & Danny Pregmann, Walter Pritchuk, Michael & Euphemia (Mia) (Keklak); Amaya Jackson; Robert Kane; Maria & Vitaliy Rakovsky

Seekers: Jason, Emilia, Judah, Nadia, & Silas

DEPARTED

Departed: Peter Gyza Sr. (11/20); John Miseyko (11/5); Peter Mizgala (12/2); Dorothy Polanchik (12/11); Robert Sorok 12/23);