

SUNDAY OF THE PRODIGAL SON



Icon of the Prodigal Son



January 24, 2016

SUNDAY OF THE PRODIGAL SON – TONE 2

OUR VENERABLE MOTHER XENIA OF ROME AND HER TWO SERVANTS

SCHEDULE OF SERVICES FOR THE WEEK OF JANUARY 25 – JANUARY 31

SATURDAY, JANUARY 30	1ST ALL SOULS SATURDAY; THE THREE HOLY FATHERS, THE GREAT HIERARCHS: BASIL THE GREAT, GREGORY THE THEOLOGIAN AND JOHN CHRYSOSTOM; THE HOLY HIEROMARTYR HIPPOLYTUS, POPE OF ROME	
9:30 AM –	Divine Liturgy & Panakhyda	
6:00 PM –	PLEASE NOTE: No Vespers this evening	
SUNDAY, JANUARY 31 –	SUNDAY OF THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST (MEATFARE); THE HOLY WONDERWORKERS AND UNMERCENARIES CYRUS AND JOHN	
9:30 AM –	Divine Liturgy	For All Parishioners

*If you are reading the bulletin during the Liturgy (including the homily), please **stop** and be attentive – будьмо уважли!*

Thank You!

to Michael Miller for his tireless work for our parish. Not only did he oversee the installation of much needed drainage around the building near the hillside but he stepped in and completed the installation of the laminate flooring in the back room.

May God bless him!

Do priests remember what we say in confession?

So often, people will ask if I remember people's sin from Confession. As a priest, I rarely remember sins from the confessional. That might seem impossible, but the truth is, sins aren't all that impressive. They aren't like memorable sunsets or meteor showers or supper-intriguing movies... they are more like the garbage.

– Fr. Mike Schmitz

1st All Souls Saturday

Saturday, January 30th is First All Souls Saturday. On that day, there will be a Divine Liturgy at 9:30 AM for all our beloved departed followed by a Panakhyda. Please write the names of all those you wish to be remembered and place in the basket in the back of the church today.

Looking Ahead:

- ❖ January 31st – Meatfare Sunday
- ❖ February 2nd – Encounter (Obligatory)
- ❖ February 7th – Cheesefare Sunday
- ❖ February 8th – The Great Fast begins (day of strict fast)
- ❖ February 20th – 2nd All Souls Saturday
- ❖ February 27th – 3rd All Souls Saturday
- ❖ February 28th – Sunday of the Holy Cross
- ❖ March 5th – 4th All Souls Saturday
- ❖ March 12th – Akathist Saturday
- ❖ March 20th – Flowery Sunday
- ❖ March 25th – Annunciation & Great and Holy Friday
- ❖ March 27th – Pascha

TO QUALIFY AS AN APOSTLE

“Therefore of these men who have accompanied us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John to that day when He was taken from us, one of these must become a witness with us of His resurrection” (Acts 1:21)

Twelve men were selected to match the twelve tribes of Israel, for this was a second and ultimate covenant inaugurated by the Son of God. Somebody would take the place of Judas. The basic qualification was that he had to have witnessed the many miracles the Lord Jesus performed since the inauguration of His ministry and most important of all, to have beheld Him resurrected from death. It was not enough to select someone who could tell about Jesus. He had to be there in person, somebody whose eyes had seen and ears had heard the Word of God, Jesus Christ.

Since God’s Son came to live and dwell among us, hundreds of thousands of people have spent their lifetimes studying the records of His life on earth. We profit from all sorts of theories. Conversely, countless millions have known but a portion of who He was and is, even having been misled and led away from Him. Millions have an opinion about Him. The true Christian knows Him.

Apostolic succession is a phrase describing those Christian communions that can claim to be descended from the earliest apostles. For some it’s a legal qualification for authenticity as inheritors of grace from the earliest stream. But for us it’s more than that—it’s the inheritance of sacred tradition that identifies the bearers as grateful heirs of spiritual gifts that flow in the Church through the centuries.

To read the sacred scriptures as Spirit-filled beneficiaries of apostolic grace is to be warmed in the heart by the same emotions they **felt when they were there when He performed**

mighty deeds in humble ways. To say with St. Peter when told at daybreak to lower his nets into the water once again, “Master, we have toiled all night and caught nothing” (Luke 5:8), only to reluctantly obey, certain it would be for nothing, then to have the net so full of fish that the cords would be broken if they tugged the net too roughly, and to say, “Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, Lord.” God broke the cords of Peter’s heart at that instant. We can grasp what he had been thinking before then—he knew all about fishing—but he understood nothing about the Spirit within him.

It’s not only the miracle, it’s the humility that accompanies the phenomenon. Jesus said nothing. **His silence shouts with eloquence.** Consider the time He was moved with compassion for the widow burying her only son. He stopped the funeral procession and turned it back to the village. Grief and the funeral are transformed into great joy and songs of praise. Those who had been there not only never forgot it, they recorded it on our behalf. Who could forget the incident of the awesome centurion whose mere presence caused all Jews to hold their breath and feel their blood pressure increase until he passed, plead like a child on behalf of his servant near death, only to have the humble Lord cure the servant with a mere word. It was no accident that none of the apostles were noted for their learning. Simple men they were, guileless for the most part, quite ordinary as the world would judge them, yet capable of wonder and amazement when One who was indeed unique manifested divinity in His person.

PLEASE DON'T ASSUME, PRAY FOR THE DEAD!

January 14, 2016 / FATHERDILLON

Adapted from "Father's Beard"

David Bowie. Alan Rickman. Robert Loggia. Maureen O'Hara. Over the last couple of months a number of celebrities have died. A lot of ink has been spilled and digital paper run off expressing the sorrow of their passing and how some of their deaths mark the end of era (which is true!). In that same vein, though, it's been interesting watching the social media feeds and reading how these people and their contributions to society have affected individuals' lives, actually having done so or otherwise. Seeing it more in the "Facebook" arena rather than professional publications, curiously I read again and again how people say such things about deceased celebrities or family members as, "He's in a better place now," or, "Heaven got another good one..." As a Catholic priest, I note these sentiments quite often, more so with family or friends who mourn the loss of a loved one. These automatic emotional responses, *de facto* canonizations, concern me a great deal, most especially when it leads to souls not being prayed for!

This is always such a touchy subject for many... and I don't begrudge people a fond remembering or hope of peace for the departed. I'm certain you understand what I'm driving at here... **The truth is not everybody goes to Heaven, and fewer still will avoid the purification**

after death. To immediately claim that all who are "generally" good, whatever that means, are owed an eternity of perfect bliss immediately upon death is absurd. (Only people like Hitler go to Hell.) And what's more, such proclamations are so disconnected from the actual person who lived that when we declare somebody to be in Heaven simply because they died, it is not for the sake of the deceased but for our own emotional satisfaction. To automatically assign someone to Heaven can, 99.999999% of the time, mean rejection of the dead person's freedom; **a dismissal of the soul's decisions** during life. It should be noted that these expressions and sentiments are by far and away in our culture the norm.

Here's the rub with me: when we just assume that someone is in heaven, or we soothe others with such absolute ideas, all that is taking place is a shallow emotional anesthetic for the living, *and the dead are not prayed for or cared for.* Let's be clear about what I'm saying: Not all people go to Hell **nor should we assume someone is in Hell.** That kind of declaration is just as illusory and detached from the deceased's freedom of will as simply stating that they are in Heaven. The recognition of someone's eternal destiny lies only within the competent authority's jurisdiction, namely that of the Church and not in individuals. Notice my

choice of wording there, “recognition of someone’s eternal destiny.” The Church, as well as God with some theological nuance, does not send souls to Heaven or Hell. God has placed that eternal decision before each and every one of us (and He assists us in choosing for Him and happiness during this life with His grace). In opposition to declaring someone to be in Heaven or in Hell, the Church holds firmly to the free will that each soul received from God. **She refuses even to definitively say that Judas is in Hell!** This freedom is part of what makes us in the “image and likeness” of God (Gen. 1:27) and He will not revoke that gift, even should we choose against Him. What a travesty it is when we do so by our assumptions of someone’s eternal destiny. However, we do recognize some to be in Heaven because of miraculous signs that God allows to communicate that this person is in fact in Heaven and is to be emulated or still has a particular role in interceding for the Church Militant. But until a person is canonized a saint, we must not assume that they are perfectly united to God! The only safe assumption is that the deceased person, who had some goodness and virtue was imperfect and sinned, is in need of purification. *We must pray for the dead!*

The freedom that was granted to the soul on earth is perfected in eternity so there are no more decisions for or against God after death; a soul is either going to Heaven or Hell. However, if that soul has loved God and neighbor as He commanded, yet

imperfectly, meaning not meriting Hell, that soul is destined for Heaven but is in need of being purified of attachment to sin before entering. This is one of God’s greatest mercies; despite being imperfect, if we loved Him He will have mercy. But for the the departed, because their will is perfected in eternity, they cannot pray for themselves. Let me say that again, the departed cannot pray for or help themselves. They need us. If our love and care for the dead meant anything in life, that love means infinitely more after they have died. If we knew that a loved one was suffering or needed help while they were alive, we would help them, would we not? How much more so can we help them after they have died! We cannot abandon them after death! To do so is one of the gravest sins against charity!

In short, love should impel us to pray for the dead. Assumptions and wishful thinking at the very least only help us feel better and at worst disregard the help that the dead so greatly need. Whether it’s Alan Rickman, a beloved friend or family member, or simply the recognition that there are souls in need of our help, prayers for the dead should be a consistent theme in our prayer life. We need to bring this back to Catholic culture. Praise God for His mercy, and even more for the gift of allowing the prayers of the living to assist souls there! It’s something that one day each of us will probably be extraordinarily grateful for!

SATAN ANNOUNCES A NEW PLAN TO ADVANCE HIS WORK

An anonymous source

Satan called a worldwide convention. In his opening address to his evil angels, he said, "We can't keep Christians from going to church. We can't keep them from reading their Bibles and knowing the truth."

"We can't even keep them from conservative values. But we can do something else. We can keep them from forming an intimate, abiding experience in Christ. If they gain that connection with Jesus, our power over them is broken. So let them go to church. Let them have their conservative lifestyles. But steal their time so they can't gain that experience in Jesus Christ."

"But how shall we do this?" shouted one of his angels.

"Keep them busy in the non-essentials of life and invent numerous schemes to occupy their minds," he answered. "Tempt them to spend, spend, spend, then borrow, borrow, borrow. Convince the husbands to work 6-7 days a week, 10-12 hours a day, so they can afford their lifestyles. Keep them from spending time with their children. As their families fragment, soon their homes will offer no escape from the pressures of work."

"Overstimulate their minds so they cannot hear that **still small voice**. Entice them to play the radio or cassette player whenever they drive, to keep the TV, the DVD, the TiVo, and their CDs going constantly in their homes. And see to it that every store and restaurant in the world plays music constantly. This will

jam their minds and break that union with Christ."

"Fill their coffee tables with magazines and newspapers. Pound their minds with the news 24 hours a day and invade their driving moments with billboards. Flood their mailboxes with junk mail, sweepstakes, catalogs, and every kind of newsletter and promotional offering free products, services and false hopes. Even in their recreation, let them be excessive. Have them return from it exhausted, disquieted and unprepared for the coming week."

"Don't let them go out in nature. Send them to amusement parks, sporting events, concerts and movies instead. And when they meet for spiritual fellowship, involve them in gossip and small talk so that they leave with troubled consciences and unsettled emotion. Let them be involved in soul-winning. But crowd their lives with so many good causes they have no time to seek power from Christ. Soon they will be working in their own strength, sacrificing their health and family unity for the good of the cause."

Well, in the end it was quite a convention. The evil angels went eagerly to their assignments, causing the Christians everywhere to get busy, busy, busy and rush here and there.

Has the devil been successful in his scheme? You be the judge.

A Lenten Hymn

Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit. Open to me the doors of repentance O Lifegiver; for my spirit rises early to pray towards Thy Holy Temple, bearing the temple of my body all defiled. But in Thy Compassion purify me by the loving kindness of Thy Mercy. Now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen. Lead me on the paths of Salvation O Mother of God, for I have covered my soul in shameful sins and have wasted my life in lazy acts. But by your intercessions, deliver me from all impurity. Have mercy on me O God according to Thy Great Mercy and according to the multitude of Thy Compassions blot out my transgressions. When I think of the many evil things I have done, wretched I am, I tremble at the fearful day of Judgement, but trusting in Thy loving kindness, like David I cry to Thee. Have mercy on me O God, have mercy on me O God, Have mercy on me O God according to Thy great Mercy

Sunday offering for January 17

Amount	Number
\$5.00	1
\$15.00	1
\$20.00	4
\$25.00	2
\$40.00	2
\$50.00	3 (1 loose)
\$85.00	2
\$200.00	1
\$300.00	1
<hr/>	
\$1050.00	
Parishioner Total:	\$1030.00
Visitor Total:	\$20.00

Average / parish household (42): \$12.82

Weekly Stewardship Goal: \$2200.00

Deficit: (\$1170.00)

Year-to-date deficit: (\$3513.00)

Last year's deficit: (\$50,690.00)

If Christ is the Prince of Peace then how do we reconcile these other seemingly contradictory words of Our Lord: 'Do not think that I come to send peace upon earth, I came not to send peace, but the sword' and 'Think you, that I am come to give peace on earth? I tell you, no but separation.' The explanation of these apparent contradictions is to be found in the words he addressed to his apostles the night of the Last Supper in which he made an important distinction between two kinds of peace: 'My peace I give unto you, not as the world gives, do I give unto you' and 'These things I have spoken to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you shall have distress, but have confidence, I have overcome the world.' There is a difference, then, between His Peace and the peace of the world. It is evident from these words that Our Lord offers a peace and a consolation that He alone can confer, a peace that comes from the right ordering of conscience, from justice, charity, love of God and love of neighbor.

*— Venerable Fulton Sheen
(The Cross and the Beatitudes)*

Pastor:

Fr. James Bankston: (619) 905-5278

Pastoral Council:

Vladimir Bachynsky: (619) 865-1279

Mark Hartman: (619) 446-6357

Luke Miller: (858) 354-2008

Social Committee Chair:

Megan Hartman (619) 540-4291

Finance Committee:

Bohdan Knianicky: (619) 303-9698



**Українська Греко-Католицька Церква
Святого Йоана Хрестителя
St. John the Baptizer
Ukrainian Greco-Catholic Church**

4400 Palm Avenue
La Mesa, CA 91941
Parish Office: (619) 697-5085

Website: stjohnthebaptizer.org

Pastor: Fr. James Bankston
frjames@mac.com
Fr. James' cell phone: (619) 905-5278

Imitating the Prodigal

Do not lose heart, O soul, do not grieve; pronounce not over yourself a final judgment for the multitude of your sins; do not commit yourself to fire; do not say: The Lord has cast me from his face. Such words are not pleasing to God. Can it be that he who has fallen cannot get up? Can it be that he who has turned away cannot turn back again? Do you not hear how kind the Father is to a prodigal?

Do not be ashamed to turn back and say boldly: I will arise and go to my Father. Arise and go! He will accept you and will not reproach you, but rather rejoice at your return. He awaits you; just do not be ashamed and do not hide from the face of God as did Adam.

It was for your sake that Christ was crucified; so will he cast you aside? He knows

who oppresses us. He knows that we have no other help but him alone. Christ knows that man is miserable. Do not give yourself up to despair and apathy, assuming that you have been prepared for the fire. Christ derives no consolation from thrusting us into the fire; He gains nothing if He sends us into the abyss to be tormented.

Imitate the prodigal son: leave the city that starves you. Come and beseech him and you shall behold the glory of God. Your face shall be enlightened and you will rejoice in the sweetness of paradise. Glory to the Lord and Lover of mankind who saves us!

St. Ephrem the Syrian

**For more information on Eastern spirituality, visit
www.ecpubs.com**