

TWENTY-THIRD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST



*Icon of Saints Cosmas and Damian -- November 1st*

# October 27, 2013

## 23RD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST – TONE 6

THE HOLY MARTYR NESTOR OF THESSALONICA, COMPANION OF ST. DEMETRIUS

### *SCHEDULE OF SERVICES FOR THE WEEK OF OCTOBER 28 – NOVEMBER 3*

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 1 – THE HOLY WONDERWORKERS AND UNMERCENARIES COSMAS AND DAMIAN; PASSING INTO ETERNAL LIFE OF METROPOLITAN ANDREI SHEPTYTSKY, 1944; PASSING INTO ETERNAL LIFE (1947) OF BLESSED THEODORE ROMZHA, BISHOP OF MUKACHEVO, AND MARTYR;

9:30 AM – Divine Liturgy

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 2 – THE HOLY MARTYRS ACINDINUS, PEGASIVS, APHTHONIUS, ELPIDEPHORUS AND ANEMPODISTUS;

6:00 PM – Great Vespers for Sunday (*satisfies for Sunday obligation*)

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 3 – 24TH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST; THE HOLY MARTYRS ACEPSIMUS, BISHOP; JOSEPH, PRIEST; AND AITHALAS, DEACON; COMMEMORATION OF THE DEDICATION OF THE CHURCH OF THE HOLY GREAT MARTYR GEORGE IN LYDDA, WHEREIN HIS PRECIOUS BODY WAS PLACED

9:30 AM – Divine Liturgy For All Parishioners

#### **Pastoral Visit by Bishop Richard**

Our Father and Bishop Richard, will make a pastoral visit to our parish on Sunday, December 22nd. In preparation for the bishop's visit, we need to have a choir practice. There will also be a practice with any young men who would like to serve as acolytes for the Hierarchical Divine Liturgy. Please contact Fr. James if you are interested in serving. Watch for further information in future bulletins.

#### **SAVE the DATE!**

The Parish Life Committee of Holy Angels Ruthenian Church invites all parishioners to celebrate their Patronal Feast day on Thursday, Nov. 7 with Vespers at 7:00 PM. A festive evening reception will follow with Angelic desserts.

*For information on reception:*

Virginia Bowden

500 Sea World Drive San Diego, CA 92109

P 619-225-4236 \* F 619-225-4252

#### **Last Sunday's Bulletin**

If you haven't yet picked up last Sunday's bulletin, it is available in the church hall, or on our website, [stjohnthebaptizer.org](http://stjohnthebaptizer.org).

#### **Sunday offering for October 20**

Amount	Number
\$5.00	1
\$15.00	1
\$20.00	4
\$21.00	1 (loose)
\$25.00	1
\$40.00	3
\$50.00	4
\$75.00	1
\$100.00	3
\$200.00	1
<hr/>	
\$1041.00	

Parishioner Total: \$996.00

Guest Total: \$45.00

Average / parish household (42): \$23.71

Weekly Stewardship Goal: \$2125.00

Shortfall: **-\$1129.00**

#### **CHANGE YOUR CLOCK**



#### **CHANGE YOUR BATTERY**

Daylight Saving Time ends next Sunday at 2 a.m. Don't forget to set your clocks **back** 1 hour before you go to bed next Saturday.

#### **Professional Directory**

As part of the parish directory which is being prepared, we wish to include professional information for our parishioners so that we all know who we should be supporting with our business. If you wish to have your information included, please fill out the form available in the church hall.

## *HOLY MARTYR NESTOR*

In the time of the suffering of St. Demetrius the Myrrh-gusher, there was a young man of Thessalonica, Nestor, who learned the Christian Faith from St. Demetrius himself. At that time Christ's enemy, Emperor Maximian, organized various games and amusements for the people. The emperor's favorite in these games was a Vandal by the name of Lyaeus, a man of Goliath-like size and strength. As the emperor's gladiator, Lyaeus challenged men every day to single combat and slew them. Thus, the bloodthirsty Lyaeus amused the bloodthirsty, idolatrous Maximian. The emperor built a special stage for Lyaeus's battles, similar to a threshing floor on pillars. Spears, points upward, were planted beneath this platform. When Lyaeus defeated someone in wrestling, he would throw him from the platform onto the forest of spears. The emperor and his pagan subjects cheered as some poor wretch writhed in torment on the spears until he died. Among Lyaeus's innocent victims were many Christians: when no one volunteered to duel with Lyaeus, by the emperor's orders Christians were arrested and forced to duel with him. Seeing this horrifying amusement of the pagan world, Nestor's heart was torn with pain,

and he decided to come forward for a duel with the gigantic Lyaeus. But first, he went to prison to see St. Demetrius and sought a blessing from him to do this. St. Demetrius blessed him, signed him with the sign of the Cross on the forehead and on the chest and prophesied to him: "You will defeat Lyaeus, but you will suffer for Christ." Thus, young Nestor went to duel with Lyaeus. Maximian was present with a multitude of people; everyone felt pity for the young Nestor, who would surely die, and tried to dissuade him from dueling with Lyaeus. Nestor crossed himself and said: "O God of Demetrius, help me!" and with God's help, he overcame Lyaeus, knocked him down, and threw him onto the sharp spears, where the heavy giant soon found death. Then all the people cried out: "Great is the God of Demetrius!" But the emperor, shamed before the people and sorrowing for his favorite Lyaeus, was greatly angered at Nestor and Demetrius, and commanded that Nestor be beheaded and Demetrius run through with lances. Thus, the Christian hero Nestor ended his earthly life and took up his habitation in the Kingdom of his Lord in the year 306. (*Prologue of Ohrid*)

### **ON LONGING FOR GOD**

*By Fr. John Breck*

Within the depths of every human being there exists an insatiable longing for God. This is an inner force, a holy desire or yearning, that can move us out of the torpor of our daily life and lift us to a painful yet sublime level of being... The tragedy of our life lies in our constant temptation to lose the focus of that longing and to desire something less than God... The longing itself becomes perverted, twisted into a self-serving drive for something that will satisfy the corrupted passions rather than nourish the hungry soul... Partial fulfillment does come in the form of gratifying personal relationships and accomplishments. We find satisfaction and pleasure in family, friends and enjoyable activities, yet even there, the pleasure and sense of fulfillment are diminished by a terrible yearning. We are consumed by a burning desire for something more, something that touches our heart, something of ineffable beauty that creates in us a response of pure joy.



## GOD'S LAW: THREAT OR PROMISE?

By the Very Rev. John Breck



"Welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you, to the glory of God!" (*Romans 15:7*)

When he wrote his various letters to churches around the Mediterranean and throughout Asia Minor, the apostle Paul used a literary convention widespread in the Hellenistic world. He began with a personal identification and blessing, followed by a word of thanksgiving for all that God had accomplished through his ministry in the life of that particular community. Then he moved on to the body of the letter, combining proclamation of the Gospel with practical teachings. This was followed toward the end by a series of exhortations: directives indicating practical, concrete ways his teachings should be put into effect within the church. Finally, he concluded with greetings to members of the community and a final benediction.

We find a good example of the apostle's exhortations in the brief passage, *Romans 15:1-7*. Based on the Gospel proclamation that makes up the body of the letter, these words draw out specific consequences for believers, consequences that take the form of responsibilities or obligations. He concludes the passage, "Welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you, to the glory of God."

There are two extremely different ways we can read exhortations of this kind. They can be taken, as they so often are, in a legalistic sense, as strict commands that tell us how to conform our behavior to the will of a just and righteous God. Or they can be seen as means of grace, by which God Himself works out a transformation in our life, leading to our eternal sharing in His very existence.

The juridical or legalistic approach is one we often identify with Western (Roman Catholic and Protestant) Christianity. But there is no question that it has infected Orthodoxy as well. In this perspective, God is viewed primarily as the righteous Judge, who gives us laws or commandments – various rules and regulations – to govern our conduct. Because God is righteous, He cannot accept our sinful unrighteousness. Therefore we must put things right with Him. This we do by obeying His commandments. At the Last Judgment, we shall be brought before the heavenly tribunal, to be judged on the way and degree to which we have obeyed God's Law, God's commands. If we have been obedient to

them, God will vindicate us. If not, then God will punish us by condemning us to outer darkness, where there is "weeping, wailing and gnashing of teeth." In this way of viewing things, the Church is basically a courtroom, God is the presiding Judge, and our salvation depends on the degree to which we have accepted His commandments and conformed our lives to them. There is a "right way" and a "wrong way" to conduct ourselves; and not even God will help us if we choose the wrong way....

It's understandable that this kind of image should have taken on such major if distorted proportions. Many of us grow up in a rather authoritarian environment, where parents, school teachers and other influential figures lay down the law and expect us to obey it. If we don't, then we suffer the consequences. It's almost inevitable that we project this image, and its accompanying experiences, onto our relationship with God, imagining Him to be the ultimate authority figure, who holds in His hands absolute power to acquit us or to condemn us, to vindicate us or to relegate us to eternal damnation.

This image of God, of judgment and of the Church represents a total distortion of the Gospel message. It's a tragic parody of certain aspects of reality that conform more to human interactions than to our relations with the Holy Trinity. Certainly we shall be judged on the basis of our deeds and attitudes, as the apostle Paul declares and as Jesus makes clear in His parables and other teachings. But that judgment is not the action of a vindictive God, who wants us to conform to His will for His own sake, or who will damn us if we fail to obey. God's commandments are given to us for life, not for death and condemnation.

To the Eastern Church Fathers, the Church is not a courtroom; it is a hospital. The Body of Christ is a locus of healing, of renewal and reconciliation. Nor is God primarily a Judge. If He is depicted that way in Jesus' parables, it is to make the point that judgment is a reality. Yet we are judged not so much by God as by ourselves, by our own refusal to accept the "straight and narrow path" that leads through the darkness and corruption of this world and into the splendor and glory of the Kingdom.

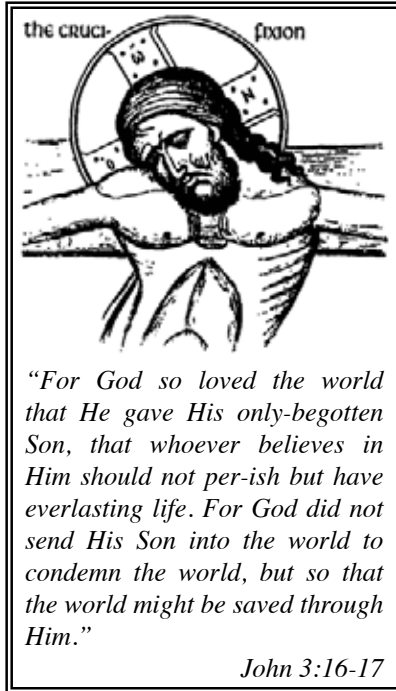
Perhaps we can imagine it this way. In this earthly life, you and I are wandering, lost, in a vast forest, stumbling about, unsure of where we are and how to return home. In the midst of that forest God opens before us a pathway, narrow and difficult, which is the only one that leads out of the darkness and towards the light. The choice is ours. We can continue to stumble blindly, trying in vain to extricate ourselves. Or we can take the pathway He proposes, by conforming to His will, His commandments, that lead to life, hope and salvation.

This means that we need to rethink entirely our notion of God's Law and the meaning of the commandments He gave to Israel and, through Jesus Christ, to the Church. Unfortunately, we have no good translation for the Hebrew term Torah. Torah suggests "law," commandment, as in the Ten Commandments, which became developed and multiplied in Israel's experience so as to cover virtually every aspect of human conduct (the book of Leviticus, for example). Torah, however – the "Law of God" – signifies not so much "laws" or "rules and regulations" as it does "Life." Conformity to Torah, to God's will for our lives, actually works a transformation within us, to make us holy as God is holy. Ethicists have long known that we become virtuous by performing virtuous deeds: our actions change us so that we actually become what we do. So it is with Torah: to accept God's Law and to act upon it brings the grace of change into our life. It lifts us out of our error, our egotism, our anxieties, our rebellion, and sets us on that narrow pathway that leads to love, joy, peace and life: fruits of the Holy Spirit.

In Jesus Christ, the whole of Torah is summed up in a single word, a single concept: Love. The New Commandment Christ issues, therefore, takes the form of a call to love others with a self-giving abandon that can lead even to death: "Greater love has no one than this, to lay down their life for their friends" (John 15:13). This is why the apostle's exhortation summons us to "Welcome one another as Christ has

welcomed you, to the glory of God." To welcome one another is not just some moral obligation. It is a response of love, in the image of Christ who first loved us beyond all measure. Every act of obedience we can perform is predicated on this prior action of God on our behalf – and this, because God Himself is Love. That love can include judgment; but its entire purpose is to lead us out of the death into which we have plunged ourselves, and to call us to a life whose every aspect serves "to the glory of God."

Like the notion of Torah or Law, the "glory of God" also needs to be clearly understood. God does not need us to glorify Him. If we are called to render



Him "glory," it is for the same reason we are called to obey His commandments: so that something vital, essential, might be transformed within us. In a word, by glorifying God, we actually participate in His glory, in the life, the beauty, the splendor of His divinity. To do all things to the glory of God, therefore, is not so much for God's sake as it is for ours. By glorifying God, we enter into the sphere of His glory and share in it fully.

In the old Reformed Church catechism there is a statement that summarizes all of this very well. It's a statement that speaks of "man," used in the generic sense, referring to men and women, young and old. "The chief end of man – of the human person – is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever." "To glorify God, and to enjoy Him forever." Insofar as we

strive to glorify God by accepting the narrow way of conformity to His will, to His commandment of love, it becomes possible to welcome one another – to receive, serve and love one another – as Christ has welcomed us. This is how we truly glorify God. And by this very act we come to know that God leads us through this world, not for judgment and condemnation, but for life. We come to know in the depths of our being that our chief end, the only real purpose and meaning in our life, is to know God, to glorify Him, and to enjoy Him – to rejoice in Him – forever.



## ON THE CHURCH AS A SPIRITUAL HOSPITAL

By Metropolitan Hierotheos Vlachos

If a person does not follow the “right way” he cannot ever reach his destination. If he does not take the proper “remedies,” he cannot ever acquire health; in other words, he will experience no therapeutic benefits. If we compare Orthodox spirituality with other Christian traditions, the difference in approach and method of therapy is evident.

A fundamental teaching of the Holy Fathers is that the Church is a “Hospital” which cures the wounds of man. In many passages of Holy Scripture such language is used. One such passage is that of the parable of the Good Samaritan: “But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was. And when he saw him, he had compassion. So he went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine; and he set him on his own animal, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. On the next day, when he departed, he took out two denarii, and gave them to the innkeeper, and said to him, ‘Take care of him; and whatever more you spend, when I come again, I will repay you’” (Luke 10:33-35).

In this parable, the Samaritan represents Christ who cured the wounded man and led him to the Inn, that is to the “Hospital” which is the Church. It is evident here that Christ is presented as the Healer, the physician who cures man’s maladies; and the Church as the true Hospital. It is very characteristic that Saint John Chrysostom, analyzing this parable, presents these truths emphasized above.

Man’s life “in Paradise” was reduced to a life governed by the devil and his wiles. “And fell among thieves,” that is in the hands of the devil

and of all the hostile powers. The wounds man suffered are the various sins, as the prophet David says: “my wounds grow foul and fester because of my foolishness” (Psalm 37). For “every sin causes a bruise and a wound.” The Samaritan is Christ Himself who descended to earth from Heaven in order to cure the wounded man. He used oil and wine to “treat” the wounds; in other words, by “mingling His blood with the Holy Spirit, he brought man to life.” According to another interpretation, oil corresponds to the comforting



word and wine to the harsh word. Mingled together they have the power to unify the scattered mind. “He set him on His own beast,” that is He assumed human flesh on “the shoulders” of His divinity and ascended incarnate to His Father in Heaven.

Then the Good Samaritan, i.e. Christ, took man to the grand, wondrous and spacious inn - to the Church. And He handed man over to the inn keeper, who is the Apostle Paul, and through the Apostle Paul to all bishops and priests, saying: “Take care of the Gentile people,

whom I have handed over to you in the Church. They suffer illness wounded by sin, so cure them, using as remedies the words of the Prophets and the teaching of the Gospel; make them healthy through the admonitions and comforting word of the Old and New Testaments.” Thus, according to Saint Chrysostom, Paul is he who maintains the Churches of God, “curing all people by his spiritual admonitions and offering to each one of them what they really need.”

In the interpretation of this parable by Saint John Chrysostom, it is clearly shown that the Church is a Hospital which cures people wounded by sin; and the bishops and priests are the therapists of the people of God.

## ON JUDGING OTHERS

From "Unseen Warfare" by Saint Theophan the Recluse

Since the enemy watches you constantly, waiting for an opportunity to sow evil in you, be doubly watchful over yourself, lest you fall in the nets spread for you. As soon as he shows you some fault in your neighbor, hasten to repel this thought, lest it take root in you and grow. Cast it out, so that no trace is left in you, and replace it by the thought of the good qualities you know your neighbor to possess, or of those people generally should have. If you still feel the impulse to pass judgment, add to this the truth, that you are given no authority for this and that the moment you assume this authority you thereby make yourself worthy of judgment and condemnation, not before powerless men, but before God, the all-powerful Judge of all. This reversal of thoughts



is the strongest means, not only for repelling accidental critical thoughts, but also for completely freeing yourself of this vice...

Even if a person's sin is not only obvious, but very grievous and comes from a hardened and unrepentant heart, do not condemn him, but raise your eyes to the wondrous and incomprehensible judgments of God; then you will see that many people, formerly full of iniquity, later repented and reached a high degree of sanctity, and that, on the other hand, others, who were on a high level of perfection, fell into a deep abyss. Take care, lest you also suffer this calamity through judging others.

## FOUR REASONS WHY PEOPLE GIVE

From "Compelled to Give" By VRev. Vladimir Berzonsky

- 1) **Obligation** – People who give only because it's an obligation. We pay taxes that way. We open our bills and write checks reluctantly. Perhaps that's the way we deal with society at large, but this is not the attitude to take when we are asked to give from our heart to the upkeep and enhancement of the holy Church;
- 2) **Satisfaction** – There's something satisfying about contributing to charity. When we make a gift to an established charity, we feel good about ourselves. In the autumn season after Labor Day and through the remaining days of the year, we are solicited by so many appeals that we must make choices. Do we put something in the Salvation Army pots at each shopping center, or do we pick and choose?
- 3) **Pride** – We all know those who make an issue of their contributions. It doesn't count unless it appears in the media that the contributors are People of Importance. They used to flaunt their donations to the party of their choice or even hedge their bets, giving to both major political parties. With new rules they must find a way to do the same, but not so conspicuously.
- 4) **Love** – All of the above are acceptable to the recipients, and all of them have value in their own right; however, gifts at the highest level first come as a true sacrifice. They are not just an excess of funds that the giver can well do without and even derives tax benefits from them, but they come from hearts that feel a compulsion to contribute. When the feeling arises within that you cannot do otherwise than to meet the needs laid out before you, when you are presented with a situation, a crisis or a grief that so overwhelms you that you are desperate to provide from your means an alleviation for that person, group or situation, you are a cheerful giver.



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

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**Website:** [stjohnthebaptizer.org](http://stjohnthebaptizer.org)

**Pastor:** Fr. James Bankston  
[frjames@mac.com](mailto:frjames@mac.com)

Fr. James' cell phone: (619) 905-5278

***No Medical Fees!***

Saints Cosmas and Damian are the principal and best known of those saints venerated in the East as the "moneyless ones," or "unmercenary ones," because they practiced their profession as physicians without fees from their patients.

According to tradition, Cosmas and Damian were twin brothers, born in Arabia of a saintly mother Theodota. The brothers studied the sciences in Syria and became eminent for their skill in medicine. Being charitable Christians, they practiced medicine with great application and success, but never took any payment for their services. They observed the Lord's command, "Without cost you have received, without cost you are to give" (Mt. 10:8).

At Aegeae in Cilicia, where they lived, they enjoyed the highest esteem of the people. When the persecution under Diocletian broke out, their very prominence rendered them marked objects of persecution. Being apprehended by order of Lysias, governor of Cilicia, they underwent various torments and were beheaded about the year 283. The three brothers of Cosmas and Damian, Anthimus, Leontius and Euprepiu, are said to have suffered with them.

Among the distinguished people who attributed recovery from serious illness to Saints Cosmas and Damian was the Emperor Justinian I who built two churches in Constantinople in honor of the martyrs. Their basilica in Rome with its lovely mosaics was dedicated in the year 530.