



Established 1918

St. George Orthodox Church

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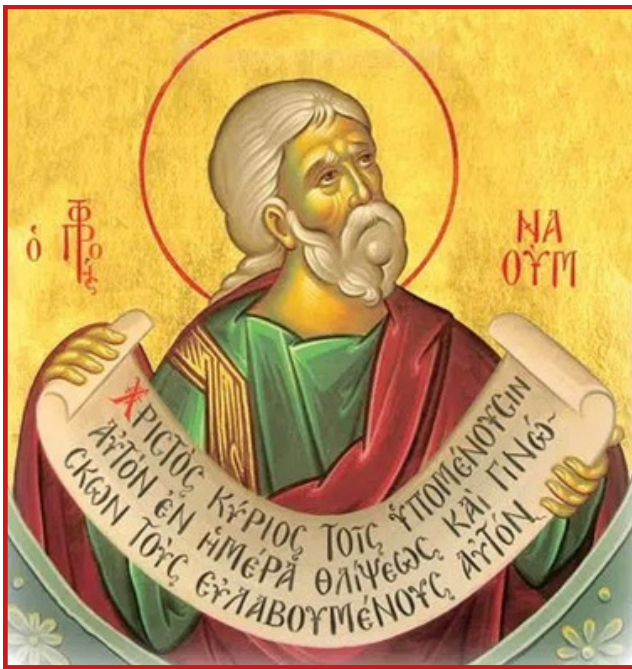
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*Metropolitan SABA, Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America
Rt. Rev. Archimandrite Jeremy, Archiepiscopal Vicar Diocese of Toledo and the Midwest*

Fr. Jeremy Finzel, Pastor



Sunday, December 1, 2024 The Fourteenth Sunday of Luke The Prophet Nahum

Tone 6/Eothinon 1

8:45am - Matins

10:00am - Deacon's Typika

Followed by Fellowship

Coming Up at St. George:

Monday, December 2 from 9:00am-Noon - Ladies Baking Baklawa and Baklava

Tuesday, December 3 from 9:00am-Noon - Ladies Baking Baklawa and Baklava

Friday, December 6 from 9:00am-Noon - Setting Up for the Bake Sale

Saturday, December 7 from 9:00am-Noon - Bake Sale

and at 5:30pm - Great Vespers

Sunday, December 8 at 8:45am - Orthros, 10:00am - Divine Liturgy

Followed by Fellowship, Adult Education and Sunday School

Monday, December 9 at 8:00am - Orthros, 9:00am - Divine Liturgy for the Conception of the Theotokos

Tuesday, December 10 from 1-3pm - Senior Share

Wednesday, December 11 at 6:30pm - Great Vespers for St. Spyridon

Thursday, December 12 at 8:00am - Orthros and Divine Liturgy for St. Spyridon
at St. Spyridon Greek Orthodox Church in Palos Heights

Friday, December 13 at 8:30am - Hours, 9:00am - Liturgy for St. Herman of Alaska

Saturday, December 14 at 5:30pm - Great Vespers

Sunday, December 15 at 8:45am - Orthros, 10:00am - Divine Liturgy

Followed by Fellowship and Parish Council Meeting

Services available on YouTube:

<https://www.youtube.com/@St.GeorgeSpringValleyOrthodox>

• *The Glory hymns at the end of Matins:*

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit.

Verily, the Lord appeared to the Disciples going to the mountain for ascension from earthly things; and they worshipped Him and learned from Him the power given to Him in every place. And they were sent to every place under Heaven to preach His Resurrection from the dead, and His translation to Heaven, to whom He had promised, not lying, that He would be with them forever; for He is Christ God and the Savior of our souls.

Both Now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

Thou hast transcended all blessings, O Virgin Theotokos! For Hades hath been spoiled by Him who was incarnate of thee. Yea, Adam was recalled, the curse was abolished. Eve was delivered and death was caused to die, and we were made to live again. Wherefore, with praise we cry: Blessed art Thou, O Christ our God, who hast thus shown Thy pleasure. Glory to Thee!

• *The Great Doxology:*

Glory be to Thee, who hast shown us Thy Light! Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, and good will among men.

We praise Thee; we bless Thee; we worship Thee; we glorify Thee. We give thanks unto Thee for the splendor of Thy glory.

O Lord, O King, O Heavenly God, Father Almighty; O Lord, only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ; and the Holy Spirit.

O Lord God, Lamb of God, O Son of the Father, that takest away the sins of the world, have mercy upon us, O Thou that takest away the sins of the world.

Accept our prayers, O Thou that sittest on the right hand of the Father, and have mercy upon us.

For Thou only art holy, Thou only art the Lord Jesus Christ, in the Glory of God the Father. Amen.

Every day will I bless Thee, and will praise Thy Name forever and ever.

Vouchsafe, O Lord, to keep us this day without sin.

Blessed art Thou, O Lord God of our Fathers, and praised and glorified is Thy Name forever. Amen.

Let Thy mercy, O Lord, be upon us, as we have put our trust in Thee.

Blessed art Thou, O Lord; teach me Thy statutes. *(Three times.)*

O Lord, Thou hast been our refuge from generation to generation. I said: Lord have mercy upon me; heal my soul for I have sinned against Thee.

O Lord, I flee unto Thee; teach me to do Thy will, for Thou art my God.

For with Thee is the fountain of life; and in Thy light we shall see light.

Extend Thy mercy unto them that know Thee.

Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal One: Have mercy upon us. *(Three times.)*

Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit.

Now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

Holy Immortal One: Have mercy upon us.

Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal One: Have mercy upon us!

- *The Resurrectional Troparion:*

Having risen again from the tomb, and having burst asunder the bonds of Hades, Thou didst unbind the condemnation of death, O Lord, redeeming all men from the snares of the enemy. And having revealed Thyself to Thine Apostles, Thou didst send them forth to proclaim Thee. And through them Thou hast granted Thy peace unto the universe, O Thou who alone art merciful!

Deacon: Through the prayers of our holy fathers, Lord Jesus Christ our God, have mercy on us and save us.

All: Amen.

- *The Great Litany:*

Deacon: In peace, let us pray to the Lord.

All: Lord, have mercy. (*Repeat after each petition.*)

For the peace from above, and for the salvation of our souls, let us pray to the Lord.

For the peace of the whole world, for the good estate of the Holy Churches of God, and the union of all men, Let us pray to the Lord.

For the Holy House, and for those who with faith, reverence and fear of God, enter therein, let us pray to the Lord.

For our father and Metropolitan Saba, for the venerable Priesthood, the Diaconate in Christ, for all the clergy and the people, let us pray to the Lord.

For this country, its President, all civil authorities, our armed forces and their families, let us pray to the Lord.

For this city, and for every city and countryside, and for the faithful who dwell therein, let us pray to the Lord. For healthful seasons, for abundance of the fruits of the earth, and for peaceful times, let us pray to the Lord.

For travelers by sea, by land, and by air; for the sick and the suffering; for the captives and their salvation, let us pray to the Lord.

For our deliverance from all tribulation, wrath, anger and necessity, let us pray to the Lord.

Deacon: Help us; save us; have mercy on us; and keep us, O God, by Thy grace.

All: Lord, have mercy.

Deacon: Calling to remembrance our all-holy, immaculate, most blessed and glorious Lay Theotokos and ever-virgin Mary, with all the saints: let us commend ourselves and each other, and all our life unto Christ our God.

All: To Thee, O Lord.

Deacon: Through the prayers of our holy fathers, Lord Jesus Christ our God, have mercy on us, and save us.

All: Amen.

- *The First Antiphon:*

Through the intercessions of the Theotokos, O Savior, save us. (*Thrice*)

- *The Little Litany:*

Deacon: Again and again in peace, let us pray to the Lord.

All: Lord, have mercy.

Deacon: Help us, save us, have mercy on us, and keep us, O God, in Thy grace.

All: Lord, have mercy.

Deacon: Calling to remembrance our all-holy, immaculate, most blessed and glorious Lay Theotokos and ever-virgin Mary, with all the saints: let us commend ourselves and each other, and all our life unto Christ our God.

All: To Thee, O Lord.

Deacon: Through the prayers of our holy fathers, Lord Jesus Christ our God, have mercy on us, and save us.

All: Amen.

- *The Second Antiphon:*

Save us, O Son of God, who didst rise again from the dead, we who sing unto Thee: Alleluia!

Save us, O Son of God, who didst rise again from the dead, we who sing unto Thee: Alleluia!

Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit.

Save us, O Son of God, who didst rise again from the dead, we who sing unto Thee: Alleluia!

Both now and ever and unto the ages of ages. Amen.

Only-begotten Son and Word of God, who art immortal, and who didst deign for our salvation to be incarnate of the Holy Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary, and without change wast made man, and was also crucified, O Christ our God, and didst trample death by death, being yet one of the Holy Trinity, glorified together with the Father and the Holy Spirit: Save us!

- *The Little Litany:*

Deacon: Again and again in peace, let us pray to the Lord.

All: Lord, have mercy.

Deacon: Help us, save us, have mercy on us, and keep us, O God, in Thy grace.

All: Lord, have mercy.

Deacon: Calling to remembrance our all-holy, immaculate, most blessed and glorious Lay Theotokos and ever-virgin Mary, with all the saints: let us commend ourselves and each other, and all our life unto Christ our God.

All: To Thee, O Lord.

Deacon: Through the prayers of our holy fathers, Lord Jesus Christ our God, have mercy on us, and save us.

All: Amen.

- *The Third Antiphon ~ The Beatitudes:*

In Thy kingdom, remember us, O Lord, when thou comest into Thy kingdom.

Blessed are the poor in spirit; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are they that mourn; for they shall be comforted.

Blessed are the meek; for they shall inherit the earth.

Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness; for they shall be filled.

Blessed are the merciful; for they shall obtain mercy.

Blessed are the pure in heart; for they shall see God.

Blessed are the peacemakers; for they shall be called the children of God.

Blessed are they that are persecuted for righteousness' sake; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are ye when men shall revile ye, and persecute ye, and say all manner of evil against ye falsely for My sake.

Rejoice and be glad, for great is your reward in heaven.
*Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit.
Both now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.*

Remember us, O Lord, when thou comest into Thy kingdom.
Remember us, O Master, when thou comest into Thy kingdom.
Remember us, O Holy One, when thou comest into Thy kingdom.

- *The Entrance Hymn:*

Deacon: Wisdom! Let us attend!

Choir: Come, let us worship and fall down before Christ.

Save us, O Son of God, Who didst rise from the dead, we who sing unto Thee: Alleluia!

Resurrectional Apolytikion (Tone 6): 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.

Troparion for St. George the Great-Martyr (Tone 4): Since thou art a liberator and deliverer of captives, a help and succour of the poor and needy, a healing physician of the sick, a contender and fighter for kings, O great among martyrs, the victory-clad George: Intercede with Christ God for the salvation of our souls.

Kontakion of Preparation of Christ's Nativity (Tone 3): On this day the Virgin cometh to the cave to give birth to God the Word ineffably, Who was before all the ages. Dance for joy, O earth, on hearing the gladsome tidings; with the Angels and the shepherds now glorify Him Who is willing to be gazed on as a young Child Who before the ages is God.

- *The Trisagion Hymn:*

Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal One: Have mercy on us! (*Three times.*)

Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, both now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

Holy Immortal One: Have mercy upon us!

Louder! Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal One: Have mercy upon us!

The Epistle for the Twenty-Third Sunday after Pentecost

Deacon: Let us attend!

Reader: O Lord, save Thy people and bless Thine inheritance. To Thee, O Lord, have I cried, O my God.

Deacon: Wisdom!

Reader: The Reading from the Epistle of St. Paul to the Ephesians (2:4-10).

Deacon: Let us attend!

Reader: But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. For we are His

workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

Deacon: Peace be to thee who readest.

Reader: And to thy spirit.

Chanter: He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will abide in the shadow of the heavenly God. He will say to the Lord: My Protector and my Refuge; my God, in Whom I trust.

All: Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia!

The Gospel for the Fourteenth Sunday of Luke

The Reading from the Holy Gospel according to St. Luke (18:35-43).

Then it happened, as He was coming near Jericho, that a certain blind man sat by the road begging. And hearing a multitude passing by, he asked what it meant. So they told him that Jesus of Nazareth was passing by. And he cried out, saying, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" Then those who went before warned him that he should be quiet; but he cried out all the more, "Son of David, have mercy on me!" So Jesus stood still and commanded him to be brought to Him. And when he had come near, He asked him, saying, "What do you want Me to do for you?" He said, "Lord, that I may receive my sight." Then Jesus said to him, "Receive your sight; your faith has made you well." And immediately he received his sight, and followed Him, glorifying God. And all the people, when they saw it, gave praise to God.

- *The Deacon now preaches a sermon.*
- *The Litany of Fervent Supplication:*

Deacon: Have mercy on us, O God, according to Thy great mercy, we pray Thee, harken and have mercy.

All: Lord, have mercy. (*Repeat three times after each petition.*)

Again we pray for all pious and Orthodox Christians.

Again we pray for our father and Metropolitan Saba and for our brethren: the preists, deacons, monastics and all our brotherhood in Christ.

Again we pray for mercy, life, peace, health, salvation and visitation and pardon and remition of sins of the servants of God we remember today, and all Orthodox Christians of true worship, who live and dwell in this community.

Again we pray for the blessed and ever-memorable founders of this holy church and for the departed servants of God, all our fathers and brethren departed this life before us, who here and in all the world lie asleep in the Lord.

Again we pray for those who bear fruit and do good works in this holy and all-venerable temple, those who serve and those who sing, and for all the people here present, who await Thy great and rich mercy.

Deacon: Through the prayers of our holy fathers, Lord Jesus Christ our God, have mercy on us and save us.

All: Amen.

- *Troparia Before the Creed:*

1st Reader: The heavenly choir singeth Thy praises, saying: Holy, holy, holy, Lord of Sabaoth; heaven and earth are full of Thy glory.

2nd Reader: Come unto him, and be enlightened, and you rfaces shall not be ashamed. The

heavenly choir singeth Thy praises, saying: Holy, holy, holy, Lord of Sabaoth; heaven and earth are full of Thy glory.

1st Reader: Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit.

2nd Reader: The choir of holy angels and archangels, with all the powers of heaven, singeth Thy praises, saying: Holy, holy, holy, Lord of Sabaoth; heaven and earth are full of Thy glory.

1st Reader: Both now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.

- *The Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed:*

All: I believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible.

And in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the only-begotten, begotten of the Father before all worlds: Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten not made, of one essence with the Father by Whom all things were made. Who for us men, and for our salvation, came down from heaven, and was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary, and became man. And was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate, and suffered and was buried. And on the third day rose again according to the Scriptures. And ascended into heaven, and sitteth at the right hand of the Father. And He shall come again, with glory, to judge the living and the dead, Whose kingdom shall have no end.

And I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the Giver of life, Who procedeth from the Father, Who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified; Who spake by the Prophets.

And I believe in One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church. I acknowledge one Baptism for the remission of sins. I look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.

Deacon: Forgive, remit, pardon, O God, our sins, both voluntary and involuntary, in deed and in word, in knowledge or in ignorance, committed by night or by day, in mind and in thought. Forgive us them all, for thou art good and lovest mankind.

- *The Lord's Prayer:*

All: Our Father, Who art in Heaven, hallowed be Thy Name. Thy kingdom come; Thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us, and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

Deacon: Through the prayers of our holy fathers, O Lord Jesus Christ our God, have mercy on us, and save us.

All: Amen.

- *The Morning Litany:*

Deacon: Let us complete our morning prayer to the Lord.

All: Lord, have mercy.

Deacon: Help us, save us, have mercy on us and keep us, O God by thy grace.

All: Lord, have mercy.

Deacon: That the whole day may be perfect, holy, peaceful and sinless, let us ask of the Lord.

All: Grant this, O Lord. (*Repeat after each petition.*)

And angel of peace, a faithful guide, a guardian of our souls and bodies
Pardon and remission our sins and transgressions, let us ask of the Lord.
All things good and profitable for our souls and peace for the world, let us ask of the Lord.
That we may complete the remaining time of our life in peace and repentance, let us ask of the Lord.

A Christian ending to our life, painless, blameless and peaceful; and a good defense before the dread Judgment Seat of Christ, let us ask of the Lord.

Deacon: Calling to remembrance our all-holy, immaculate, most blessed and glorious Lady Theotokos and ever-virgin Mary, with all the saints: let us commend ourselves and each other and all our life to Christ our God.

All: To Thee, O Lord.

Deacon: Through the prayers of our holy fathers, Lord Jesus Christ our God, have mercy on us and save us.

All: Amen.

Deacon: O all-holy Trinity, consubstantial might, Kingdom undivided and source of all good: Be gracious to me, a sinner, establish and give understanding to my heart, and take away from me every defilement. Enlighten my mind, that I may continually glorify, hymn, and worship Thee, and say: One is holy, one is the Lord Jesus Christ, to the glory of God the Father. Amen.

Choir: One Holy, one Lord Jesus Christ, in the glory of God the Father. Amen.

- *The Pre-Communion Prayer:*

All: I believe, O Lord, and I confess, that Thou art truly the Christ, the Son of the living God, who didst come into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief.

And I believe that this is truly Thine own immaculate Body, and that this is truly Thine own precious Blood. Wherefore, I pray Thee, have mercy upon me, and forgive my transgressions, both voluntary and involuntary, of word and of deed, of knowledge and of ignorance; and make me worthy to partake without condemnation of Thine immaculate Mysteries, unto remission of my sins and unto life everlasting. Amen.

Of Thy Mystical Supper, O Son of God, accept me today as a communicant; for I will not speak of Thy mysteries to Thine enemies, neither will I give Thee a kiss as did Judas, but like the thief will I confess Thee: 'Remember me, O Lord, in Thy kingdom.' Not unto judgment nor unto condemnation be my partaking of Thy Holy Mysteries, O Lord, but unto healing of soul and body.

- *The Communion Hymn:*

Praise ye the Lord from Heaven; praise ye Him in the highest. Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia.

Deacon: With the fear of God, in faith and love, draw near!

Choir: Blessed is he that cometh in the Name of the Lord; the Lord is God and hath appeared unto us.

- *The Deacon serves Holy Communion*

Choir: Receive me today, O Son of God, a partaker of Thy sacramental supper. For I shall not divulge the mysteries to Thine enemies, nor give Thee a kiss like Judas, but like the thief, I shall confess to Thee: 'Remember me, O Lord, in Thy Kingdom!'

Deacon: O God, save Thy people and bless Thine inheritance.

Choir: We have seen the true light, we have received the Heavenly Spirit; we have found the true and saving faith, in the worship of the undivided Trinity.

- *Psalm 33 - Thanksgiving Psalm:*

All: Blessed be the name of the Lord, from this time forth and forevermore. (Three times.)

Reader: I will bless the Lord at all times; His praise shall continually be in my mouth. In the Lord shall my soul be praised; let the meek hear and be glad. O magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt His Name together. I sought the Lord, and He heard me, and delivered me from all my tribulations. Come unto Him, and be enlightened, and your faces shall not be ashamed. This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his tribulations. The angel of the Lord will encamp round about them that fear Him, and will deliver them. O taste and see that the Lord is good; blessed is the man that hopeth in Him. O fear the Lord, all ye His saints; for there is no want to them that fear Him. Rich men have turned poor and gone hungry; but they that seek the Lord shall not be deprived of any good thing. Come ye children, hearken unto me; I will teach you the fear of the Lord. What man is there that desireth life, who loveth to see good days? Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from speaking guile. Turn away from evil, and do good; seek peace, and pursue it. The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and His ears are opened unto their supplication. The face of the Lord is against them that do evil, utterly to destroy the remembrance of them from the earth. The righteous cried, and the Lord heard them, and He delivered them out of all their tribulations. The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a contrite heart, and He will save the humble of spirit. Many are the tribulations of the righteous, and the Lord shall deliver them out of them all. The Lord keepeth all their bones, not one of them shall be broken. The death of sinners is evil, and they that hate the righteous shall do wrong. The Lord will redeem the souls of His servants, and none of them will do wrong that hope in Him.

All: Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit; both now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

- *The Dismissal:*

Choir: It is truly meet to bless thee, O Theotokos, the ever-blessed and all-blameless, and the Mother of our God. More honorable than the cherubim and more glorious beyond compare than the seraphim, thou who without corruption bearest God the Word and art truly Theotokos: We magnify thee.

Deacon: Through the prayers of our holy fathers, Lord Jesus Christ our God, have mercy on us, and save us.

All: Amen.

Information & Announcements

The Nativity Fast: We are in the Nativity Fast from November 15th until the Feast of Nativity on December 25th. We have the Archdiocese guidelines for fasting posted downstairs, but please consult with Fr. Jeremy if you have questions about approaching the fast. Please be

mindful of the fasting guidelines when bringing food to coffee hour. For guidelines, articles and all kinds of information about the Nativity Fast, check out the archdiocese's website here: <https://www.antiochian.org/dashboard?name=The%20Nativity%20Fast>

Annual Bake Sale: We will be extra busy this week, so please join us if you're able! Monday and Tuesday, the 2nd and 3rd, we'll be baking baklawa and baklava from 9am to noon. Friday the 6th, we'll be setting up for the bake sale from 9am to noon. Also, if you're bringing goodies you made at home, please do so between 9am and noon on Friday the 6th. And then Saturday the 7th is the big day! The bake sale is from 9am to noon and if you can help in any way, please be at the church by 8am. Please see Ruth or Allyson for more information.

Christmas Road Game: There is a Christmas Road board game available for sale for \$25 each from the church, which Metropolitan +Saba has encouraged us to consider. Please see Fr. Jeremy or Kh. Jordan with any questions!

Collection for Hall Township Food Pantry: Throughout the Nativity fast, we are collecting alms, financial donations, for the food pantry here in Spring Valley. You can place your contribution in the alms box at the back of the church.

Parish Council Members

Elected & Appointed Members

Wayne Sanders, *Chair*

Melanie Thompson, *Treasurer*

Sbdn. David Anderson, *Sunday School*

Mark Kerasotes, *Vice-Chair & Order of St. Ignatius*

Rdr. Michael Baum, *Secretary & Ecclesiarch*

Organization Representatives

Genie Sanders, *Chanters/Choir*

Maxwell Colby, *Young Adults*

Allyson Scandale, *Antiochian Women*

Robert Abraham, *Facilities*

Birthdays & Anniversaries

December 4 – Kh. Katherine Buss

The Holy Scriptures: Nourishment of the Faithful, Part Two

By Metropolitan Saba (Isper)



What, in reality, is this book?

The Bible is, first and foremost, a theological book, presenting the mystery of God to humanity in a practical, not theoretical, manner. God, whose mystery cannot be comprehended, reveals Himself to humanity little by little, progressively. God accompanies humans with astonishing patience to open their minds to understand Him as He is, not as they imagine Him to be. Often, people misunderstood Him (and still do), attributing their whims and perceptions to Him, distorting and desecrating His image. The perpetual sin of mankind is to restrict God according to its measure, instead of raising itself to the

measure of God. Therefore, God chose to reveal Himself by using those whom He designated, those to whom we refer as prophets and apostles. However, He began to practically reveal Himself through accompanying the people to whom He chose to reveal Himself. From Abraham, the father of the fathers and the father of many nations, to Jesus Christ, God patiently waited over eighteen centuries for His image to be truly revealed to humanity – yet people still want to perceive Him in their own image and superimpose onto Him their ideas and interpretations.

The Bible is, therefore, a divine book, gradually unveiling the truth of God using the style that is understood by those to whom He reveals Himself. If the book speaks of history, it is to show God's work within it, thus revealing His nature. Let us use the following image as an example of this:

According to the understanding of the peoples of the Near East, when two ancient peoples confronted each other in war, their respective gods were believed to take part in the war alongside them – isn't this what we see in the religious thinking of people even today? So, when one people is victorious, their god is deemed as the strongest; thus, the defeated people worship him, while the victorious offer him thanks. In this manner, the believers of the Old Testament believed that God fought on their side when they won; but when they were defeated, unlike all of the other ancient peoples (and herein lies the divine work in the holy scriptures), they understood it that their God abandoned them because they had sinned. Therefore, they had to repent and return to obeying their God's commandments to win and be liberated.

Thus, God revealed Himself as the Master of history. God used history as a stage to reveal His attributes. When the holy scriptures narrate a historical event, they do so not historically but theologically – meaning that the purpose is not a historical record of the event, but a religious perspective on the God Who is revealed through it. The protagonist of the event is not the prophet or the king or the leader, but God, Who is hidden behind what is happening in history, or rather, moves the strings of history while holding them all in His hands.

In this way, we should read the holy scriptures as a message from God addressed to us personally – a message telling us that we are loved by Him; that the meaning of our lives and existence is in Him, with Him, and through Him; and that we are called to remove the dirt of sins accumulated on us to see the truth of God as He is.

Anyone who has experienced the extent to which his sins conceal him from God realizes well the way in which human beings pollute and distort the image of God. God's continuous work in the holy scriptures was to constantly reveal Himself each time to the extent that people could understand and comprehend until "the fullness of time" arrived, when God fully revealed Himself to them in the person of His only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ. "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father" (John 1:14).

God did not complete this revelation independently, apart from man. That is to say, God was not solely the actor and man solely the receiver. Man needed to grow in the knowledge of God so that God could reveal Himself more and more. Thus, an educational program was initiated by God for the benefit of man. This divine program required the gradual elevation of man's spiritual level until it could rightly come to the knowledge of God. The fallen, sinful man, enslaved to

Satan and incapable of enjoying the grace of God – whose mind was darkened and divided against himself, his brother, and nature – longed for his origin but did not know it and could not reach it; he could not begin to walk the right path. The solution was in God's hands, and the initiative came from Him.

His first call went to Abraham. Thus, Abraham knew a God Who makes and fulfills His promises, as when He promised him that Sarah would conceive. He is a God Who does not accept human sacrifices, but as seen in the narrative of the sacrifice of Isaac, instead asks for animal sacrifices (Gen. 22:1-19). He is a God different from other gods. Abraham's righteousness lies in his loyalty to God. God did not change much about Abraham's habits and moral concepts, but was content to be Abraham's God, and for Abraham to be merely loyal to Him and His teachings. Thus, God was first known as the God of Abraham. Then, with the descendants of Abraham, He became the God of Abraham and Isaac, and later Jacob was added. Thus, He was known as the God of our fathers.

This was not strange to the concepts of those days. Each tribe had its god, each clan had its deity, and often a clan had more than one. However, the God of our fathers was different because He did not accept any other god beside Him. He is a jealous God, restricted by nothing: no idol, no image, no place. He initiates and commands, and He is obeyed. He is the God Who makes a covenant with man and remains loyal to this covenant, so long as man reciprocates this loyalty. When man breaks God's covenant, as he often did and still does today, God's response is to leave him until he repents and returns to Him – then He accepts him quickly and resumes His commitments. Even in God's temporary abandonment of man, there is an educational objective. Such a dynamic and vital relationship is unknown in the history of religions: A God calls, and a man responds. Man often falters and disrupts this covenantal relationship, yet God waits for His creation to recommit to the terms of that covenant and resume the journey with Him towards the completion of its salvation. Ours is a God who endured for eighteen hundred years the harshness of man, his narrow-mindedness and his ignorance. Such a God could not be the creation of human beings because humanity was not capable of contemplating such a God.

His Eminence, the Most Reverend Saba Isper is the Archbishop of New York and Metropolitan of the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America. His Beatitude Patriarch John X of Antioch and All the East and the Holy Synod of Antioch elected His Eminence to lead the Archdiocese during its extraordinary session on Feb. 23, 2023, in Balamand, Lebanon.

His Eminence will lead and oversee the Archdiocese's parishes, missions, departments, institutions and organizations in the United States and Canada from the headquarters in Englewood, New Jersey. The auxiliary bishops aid him in his administration across the continent.

For more information on His Eminence and his teachings, please visit <https://www.antiochian.org/dashboard?name=MetSaba>

