

SAINT LUKE THE EVANGELIST GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH



JANUARY 3, 2010

THE SUNDAY BEFORE EPIPHANY

The Holy Prophet Malachi, Saint Genevieve

The second day of the Forefeast of Theophany falls on January 3. Today's hymns invite us to go in spirit to the Jordan River where the Creator comes to be baptized. He is the Light which shines in the darkness (John 1:5), and today He begins to overcome that darkness.

The Holy Prophet Malachi lived 400 years before the Birth of Christ, at the time of the return of the Jews from the Babylonian Captivity. Malachi was the last of the Old Testament prophets, therefore the holy Fathers call him "the seal of the prophets."

Manifesting himself an image of spiritual goodness and piety, he astounded the nation and was called Malachi, i.e., an angel. His prophetic book is included in the Canon of the Old Testament. In it he upbraids the Jews, foretelling the coming of Jesus Christ and His Forerunner, and also the Last Judgment (Mal 3:1-5; 4:1-6).

Saint Genevieve was born of wealthy parents in Gaul (modern France) in the village of Nanterre, near Paris, around 422. Her father's name was Severus, and her mother was called Gerontia. According to the custom of the time, she often tended her father's flocks on Mt. Valerien.

When she was about seven years old, St Germanus of Auxerre (July 31) noticed her as he was passing through Nanterre. The bishop kissed her on the head and told her parents that she would become great in the sight of God, and would lead many to salvation. After Genevieve told him that she wished to dedicate herself to Christ, he gave her a brass medal with the image of the Cross upon it. She promised to wear it around her neck, and to avoid wearing any other ornaments around her neck or on her fingers.

When it was reported that Attila the Hun was approaching Paris, Genevieve and the other nuns prayed and fasted, entreating God to spare the city. Suddenly, the barbarians turned away from Paris and went off in another direction.

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AT THE SMALL ENTRANCE WE SING

RESURRECTIONAL APOLYTIKION. MODE 5.

Let us worship the Word who is unoriginate * with the Father and the Spirit, and from a Virgin was born * for our salvation, O believers, and let us sing His praise. * For in His goodness He was pleased * to ascend the Cross in the flesh, and to undergo death, * and to raise up those who had died, * by His glorious Resurrection.

APOLYTIKION OF THE FOREFEAST. MODE 4.

O Zabublon, prepare, and be ready, Nephthaim. * Jordan River, hold your course, and exultantly receive * the Master who is coming to be baptized. * Adam leap for joy with Eve the Foremother. * No longer hide yourselves, as once in Paradise; * for having seen you naked He has appeared * to clothe you in your former vesture. * The Christ has appeared, wishing to renew * the entire creation.

APOLYTIKION FOR THE CHURCH. MODE 5.

The holy Apostle, the All-hymned Luke, who is acknowledged by the Church of Christ as the recorder of the Acts of the Apostles, and the splendid author of the Gospel of Christ. Let us praise with sacred hymns as a physician, who heals the infirmities of man, and the ailments of nature, who cleanses spiritual wounds, and prays unceasingly for our souls.

KONTAKION. MODE 4.

Today the Lord has appeared in the courses of the Jordan, crying to John and saying, be not dismayed at my baptism; for I have verily come to save Adam the first to be created.

ΑΝΑΣΤ. ΑΠΟΛΥΤΙΚΙΟΝ. ΗΧΟΣ ΠΛ. Α΄.

Τὸν συνάναρχον Λόγον Πατρὶ καὶ Πνεύματι, τὸν ἐκ Παρθένου τεχθέντα εἰς σωτηρίαν ἡμῶν, ἀνυμνήσωμεν πιστοὶ καὶ προσκυνήσωμεν, ὅτι ἠϋδόκησε σαρκί, ἀελθεῖν ἐν τῷ σταυρῷ, καὶ θάνατον ὑπομεῖναι, καὶ ἐγείραι τοὺς τεθνεώτας, ἐν τῇ ἐνδόξῳ Ἀναστάσει αὐτοῦ.

ΑΠΟΛΥΤ. ΤΟΝ ΠΡΟΕΟΡΤΙΟΝ. ΗΧΟΣ Δ΄.

Ἐτοιμάζου Ζαβουλών, καὶ εὐτρεπίζου Νεφθαλείμ. Ἰορδάνη ποταμέ, στήθι ὑπόδεξαι σκιρτῶν, τοῦ βαπτισθῆναι ἐρχόμενον τὸν Δεσπότην. Ἀγάλλου ὁ Ἀδὰμ σὺν τῇ Προμήτορι, μὴ κρύπτετε ἑαυτοὺς, ὡς ἐν Παραδείσῳ τὸ πρῖν, καὶ γὰρ γυμνοὺς ἰδὼν ὑμᾶς ἐπέφανεν, ἵνα ἐνδύσῃ τὴν πρώτην στολήν. Χριστὸς ἐφάνη, τὴν πᾶσαν κτίσιν, θέλων ἀνακαινίσαι.

KONTAKION. ΗΧΟΣ Δ΄.

Ἐν τοῖς ρείθροις σήμερον τοῦ Ἰορδάνου, Ἐγεγονῶς ὁ Κύριος, τῷ Ἰωάννῃ ἐκβοᾷ. Μὴ δειλιάσης βαπτίσει με· σῶσαι γὰρ ἤκω, Ἀδὰμ τὸν πρωτόπλαστον.

THE READINGS OF THE DAY

EPISTLE READING

SAINT PAUL'S

SECOND LETTER TO TIMOTHY 4:5-8

TIMOTHY, my son, always be steady, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfil your ministry. For I am already on the point of being sacrificed; the time of my departure has come. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that Day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing.

GOSPEL READING

MARK 1:1-8

The beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. As it is written in Isaiah the prophet, 'Behold, I send my messenger before your face, who shall prepare your way; the voice of one crying in the wilderness: prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight' John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. And there went out to him all the country of Judea, and all the people of Jerusalem; and they were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. Now John was clothed with camel's hair, and had a leather girdle around his waist, and ate locusts and wild honey. And he preached, saying, "After me comes he who is mightier than I, the thong of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie. I have baptized you with water; but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

“The one who engages in a pursuit of wisdom out of devotion and stands prepared against the invisible forces should pray that both the natural discernment (with its proportionate light) and the illuminating grace of the Spirit remain with him. The former trains the flesh in the acquisition of virtue through asceticism while the latter illuminates the mind to select the companionship of wisdom before all others, according to the Scripture, 'He works the destruction of the strongholds of evil and of every pretension which raises itself up against the knowledge of God' (2 Cor 10.5). Joshua the son of Nun clearly shows this by asking in prayer, 'Stand still, O sun, at Gibeon' (Josh 10.12), that is, that the light of the knowledge of God be kept secure for him in the mountain of spiritual contemplation, 'and the moon in the valley,' that is, that the natural discernment which lies in the frailty of the flesh remain steadfast through virtue.

—SAINT MAXIMOS THE CONFESSOR (580-662)”

ANNOUNCEMENTS

UPCOMING CHURCH SERVICES:

Tues., Jan. 5, The Eve of Epiphany, Vesperal Div. Liturgy / Blessing of the Waters, 8:30am

Wed., Jan. 6, The Epiphany of our Lord, Orthros / Div. Liturgy / Blessing of the Waters, 8:30am

Thurs., Jan. 7, Synaxis of St. John the Baptist, Divine Liturgy, 9am

Saturday, Jan. 9, Great Vespers, 6pm

UPCOMING CLASSES:

NO CLASSES THIS WEEK

VASILOPITA

We will celebrate the cutting of the Vasilopita today. Afterwards, we will pass a second tray for Saint Basil's Academy, the Archdiocesan home for disadvantaged youth.

STEWARDSHIP UPDATE

We have received 35 pledge cards totaling \$55,370. Our current average pledge is \$1582. Our annual budget exceed \$135,000. Thank you to all who have already made their pledge for 2010 – we humbly ask that you give generously so that we can meet our expenses. *Please return your Stewardship Card* as soon as possible. Your generosity is appreciated!

HOUSE BLESSINGS

Following the celebration of Epiphany of January 5-6, it is customary for Orthodox Christians to have their homes blessed in order to ask for God's blessings upon themselves and their families during the new year. If you would like to have your home blessed, please see the sign-up sheet in the Narthex.

BAPTISM

Randy and Karen Sade will be received into the Orthodox Church through Holy Baptism at 2pm on Jan. 9. All are invited to attend this joyous event.

GREEK SCHOOL

Greek School and Greek dancing will resume again on Tuesday January 12, 2010 at 6 pm.

“The great plan of God the Father is the secret and unknown mystery of the dispensation which the only begotten Son revealed by fulfilling in the incarnation, thus becoming a messenger of the great plan of God the eternal Father. The one who knows the meaning of the mystery and who is so incessantly lifted up both in work and in word through all things until he acquires what is sent down to him is likewise a messenger of the great plan of God.

—SAINT MAXIMOS THE CONFESSOR (580-662)”

SYNAXARION OF THE DAY

Continued from front page...

Years later, when she was fifteen, Genevieve was taken to Paris to enter the monastic life. Through fasting, vigil and prayer, she progressed in monasticism, and received from God the gifts of clairvoyance and of working miracles. Gradually, the people of Paris and the surrounding area regarded Genevieve as a holy vessel (2 Tim. 2:21).

St Genevieve considered the Saturday night Vigil service to be very important, since it symbolizes how our whole life should be. "We must keep vigil in prayer and fasting so that the Lord will find us ready when He comes," she said. She was on her way to church with her nuns one stormy Saturday night when the wind blew out her lantern. The nuns could not find their way without a light, since it was dark and stormy, and the road was rough and muddy. St Genevieve made the Sign of the Cross over the lantern, and the candle within was lit with a bright flame. In this manner they were able to make their way to the church for the service.

There is a tradition that the church which St Genevieve suggested that King Clovis build in honor of Sts Peter and Paul became her own resting place when she fell asleep in the Lord around 512 at the age of eighty-nine. Her holy relics were later transferred to the church of St Etienne du Mont in Paris. Most of her relics, and those of other saints, were destroyed during the French Revolution.

The Martyr Gordius was born at the end of the third century in the city of Caesarea of Cappadocia into a Christian family. When he came of age, he entered military service. Because of his valor and military skill, he was made a centurion. During the persecution of Christians at the beginning of the fourth century, he left the world and settled in the

Sinai desert to prepare himself for the good deed of confessing the Name of Christ the Savior.

In the year 320, Gordius openly appeared before the prefect of a city where pagan games were being held, and identified himself as a Christian. He was arrested, suffered terrible torments, then was beheaded.

Saint Ekvtime (Euthymius) Taqaishvili, called the "Man of God," was born January 3, 1863, in the village of Likhauri, in the Ozurgeti district of Guria, to the noble family of Svimeon Taqaishvili and Gituli Nakashidze. He was orphaned at a young age and raised by his uncle.

From early childhood St. Ekvtime demonstrated a great passion for learning. Having completed his studies at the village grammar school, he enrolled at Kutaisi Classical High School. In 1883 he graduated with a silver medal and moved to St. Petersburg to continue his studies in the department of history-philology at St. Petersburg University. In 1887, having successfully completed his studies and earned a degree in history, St. Ekvtime returned to Georgia and began working in the field of academia. His profound faith and love for God and his motherland determined his every step in this demanding and admirable profession.

In 1895 Ekvtime married Nino Poltoratskaya, daughter of the famous Tbilisi attorney Ivan Poltoratsky, who was himself a brother in-law and close friend of St. Ilia Chavchavadze the Righteous. From the very beginning of his career St. Ekvtime began to collect historical-archaeological and ethnographical materials from all over Georgia. His sphere of scholarly interests was broad, including historiography, archaeology, ethnography, epigra-

phy, numismatics, philology, folklore, linguistics, and art history. Above all, St. Ekvtime strove to learn more about Georgian history and culture by applying the theories and methodologies of these various disciplines to his work.

In 1889 St. Ekvtime established the Exarchate Museum of Georgia, in which were preserved ancient manuscripts, sacred objects, theological books, and copies of many important frescoes that had been removed from ancient churches. This museum played a major role in rediscovering the history of the Georgian Church.

In 1907 St. Ekvtime founded the Society for Georgian History and Ethnography. Of the many expeditions organized by this society, the journey through Muslim (southwestern) Georgia was one of the most meaningful. Having witnessed firsthand the aftermath of the forced isolation and Islamization of this region, St. Ekvtime and his fellow pilgrims acquired a greater love for the Faith of their forefathers and became more firmly established in their national identity. Though they no longer spoke the Georgian language, the residents of this region received the venerable Ekvtime with great respect, having sensed from his greeting and kindness that he had come from their far-off motherland.

There was not a single patriotic, social or cultural movement in Georgia during the first quarter of the 20th century in which St. Ekvtime did not actively take part. Among his other important achievements, he was one of the nine professors who founded Tbilisi University in 1918. St. Ekvtime also vigorously advocated the restoration of the autocephaly of the Georgian Orthodox Church.

On March 11, 1921, the Georgian government went into exile in France. The government archives and the nation's spiritual and cultural treasures were also flown to France for protection from the

Bolshevik danger. St. Ekvtime was personally entrusted to keep the treasures safe, and he and his wife accompanied them on their flight to France. St. Ekvtime bore the hardships of an emigrant's life and the horrors of World War II with heroism, while boldly resisting the onslaught of European and American scholars and collectors and the claims of other Georgian emigrants to their "family relics."

In 1931 St. Ekvtime's wife, Nino, his faithful friend and companion, died of starvation. The elderly widower himself often drew near to the brink of death from hunger, cold, and stress, but he never faltered in his duty before God and his motherland—he faithfully protected his nation's treasures.

The perils were great for St. Ekvtime and the treasures he protected: British and American museums sought to purchase the Georgian national artifacts; a certain Salome Dadiani, the widow of Count Okholevsky, declared herself the sole heir of the Georgian national treasure; during World War II the Nazis searched St. Ekvtime's apartment; even the French government claimed ownership of the Georgian treasures.

Finally, the Soviet victory over fascist Germany created conditions favorable for the return of the national treasures to Georgia. According to an agreement between Stalin and De Gaulle, the treasures and their faithful protector were loaded onto an American warplane and flown back to their motherland on April 11, 1945. When he finally stepped off the plane and set foot on Georgian soil, St. Ekvtime bowed deeply and kissed the earth where he stood. Georgia greeted its long-lost son with great honor. The people overwhelmed St. Ekvtime with attention and care, restored his university professorship, and recognized him as an active member of the Academy of Sciences. They

healed the wounds that had been inflicted on his heart.

Exhausted by the separation from his motherland and the woes of emigration, St. Ekvtime rejoined society with the last of his strength. But mankind's enemy became envious of the victory of good over evil and rose up against St. Ekvtime's unshakable spirit. In 1951 the Chekists arrested his stepdaughter, Lydia Poltoratskaya. St. Ekvtime, who by that time was seriously ill, was now left without his caregiver. In 1952, without any reasonable explanation, St. Ekvtime was forbidden to lecture at the university he himself had helped to found, and he was secretly placed under house arrest. The people who had reverently greeted him upon his return now trembled in fear of his persecution and imminent death. Many tried to visit and support St. Ekvtime, but they were forbidden. On February 21, 1953, St. Ekvtime died of a heart attack, and three days later a group of approximately forty mourners accompanied the virtuous prince to his eternal resting place.

On February 10, 1963, the centennial of St. Ekvtime's birth, his body was reburied at the Didube Pantheon in Tbilisi. When his grave was uncovered, it was revealed that not only his body, but even his clothing and footwear had remained incorrupt. St. Ekvtime's relics were moved once again, to the Pantheon at the Church of St. Davit of Gareji on Mtatsminda, where they remain today. The body of Nino Poltoratskaya-Taqaishvili was brought from Leville (France) and buried next to St. Ekvtime on February 22, 1987.

The Holy Synod of the Georgian Apostolic Orthodox Church canonized St. Ekvtime on October 17, 2002, and joyously proclaimed him a "Man of God."

The gifts of grace are preserved by a humble mind and a ready will, but destroyed by pride and sloth

HOMILY 6

BY SAINT MAKARIOS OF EGYPT

1. THE souls that are lovers of truth and of God, and desirous to put on Christ completely, though they may suffer in some measure a state of emptiness, yet being wholly nailed to the cross of Christ, they perceive, day after day, an experiential sense of their advances towards the spiritual Bridegroom. And being wounded with an heavenly desire, and hungering after righteousness, they have an insatiable longing for the Spirit to shine out upon them. And though they are thought worthy to receive, through faith, the knowledge of divine mysteries, or are made partakers of the gladness of heavenly grace, yet they have no confidence in themselves: but the more of spiritual gifts they enjoy, the more insatiable is the heavenly desire they are filled with; the more they are sensible of the spiritual progress in themselves, the more hungry and thirsty are they after the increase of grace; and the richer they spiritually are -- but so much the more do they seem to themselves to be in want, and are carried out with a spiritual desire after the heavenly Bridegroom, as says the wise man: "They that eat me shall yet be hungry, and they that drink me shall yet be thirsty."

2. Souls like these, that have a fervent and insatiable love for the Lord, are thought worthy of the redemption from vile affections, and receive the irradiation and presence of the Holy Spirit, which is unspeakable, and the mystical fellowship in the fullness of grace. But as many souls as are destitute of manly vigour and activity, are still but as in the flesh, having never entertained any hopes of receiving the sanctification of their heart through pa-

tience and long-suffering, nor of enjoying the fellowship of the Spirit, with the utmost sensation and assurance. These, after having been once thought worthy of divine grace, have yet been insensibly circumvented by the evil one, and so have given themselves over to carelessness and remissness. And the reason is evident; after they have received the grace of the Spirit, and actually enjoyed the comfort of grace in rest and spiritual sweetness, they trust in it; they are lifted up, and take no farther care, being neither of a contrite heart, nor humble mind; neither have they waited with all diligence and faith, to be perfectly filled with grace but instead of that, they were full, they were completely satisfied, and rested in the first consolation of grace. The progress such souls made tended more to elevation than humility; so that they were stripped again of that very gift, which before was vouchsafed to them, through their careless contempt of any thing farther and the vain swelling of their own opinion.

3. The soul that is truly a lover of God, and a lover of Christ, though it does righteous works without number, demeans itself however, as if it had wrought nothing at all, through the insatiable love it bears to the Lord. And though by fastings and by watchings it has even macerated the body, it applies itself to the pursuit of the virtues still, as if it never had begun before to take the least pains about them. Though it has been thought worthy of the several gifts of the Spirit, or favoured with revelations and heavenly mysteries; yet, by reason of its immense love for the Lord, does it seem to itself as if it had nothing in possession: but hungering and thirsting through faith and love, it is carried on insatiably in the persevering spirit of prayer to the mysteries of grace, and to every degree of virtue. And being wounded by the heavenly Spirit, continually exciting an inflamed desire after the heavenly Bridegroom, and longing to be complete-

ly admitted to the mystical and inexpressible communion with him in the sanctification of the Spirit; having the face of the soul unveiled, and looking with a steady eye upon the heavenly Bridegroom, face to face, in the light which is spiritual and not to be expressed, it mixes with him in all the fullness of assurance, becomes conformable to his death, ever waiting in the abundance of desire to die for the sake of Christ; and expecting to obtain, under the conduct of the Spirit, an entire redemption from sin and the darkness of the affections, that being purified by the Spirit, sanctified in soul and body, it may be made a vessel clean prepared for the reception of the heavenly ointment, and the residence of Christ, the true and heavenly King. And then is the soul filled with the heavenly life, and becomes the pure habitation of the Holy Spirit.

4. But these are heights which the soul does not reach all at once, but through many labours and conflicts, with variety of trials and temptations, it receives spiritual growth and improvement, 'til at last it comes to an entire exemption from its old affections; holding out, with a cheerful and noble obstinacy against every succeeding temptation, it is then thought worthy of great honours and spiritual gifts, and becomes an inheritor of the heavenly kingdom in Christ Jesus our Lord, to whom be glory for ever. Amen.