

SAINT LUKE THE EVANGELIST GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH



JANUARY 15, 2012

THE 12TH SUNDAY OF LUKE

Saint Paul of Thebes was born in Egypt around 227 in the Thebaid of Egypt. Left orphaned, he suffered many things from a greedy relative over his inheritance. During the persecution against Christians under the emperor Decius (249-251), St Paul learned of his brother-in-law's insidious plan to deliver him into the hands of the persecutors, and so he fled the city and fled into the wilderness.

Settling into a mountain cave, St Paul dwelt there for ninety-one years, praying incessantly to God both day and night. He sustained himself on dates and bread, which a raven brought him, and he clothed himself with palm leaves.

St Anthony the Great (January 17), who also lived as an ascetic in the Thebaid desert, had a revelation from God concerning St Paul. St Anthony thought that there was no other desert dweller such as he. Then God said to him, "Anthony, there is a servant of God more excellent than you, and you should go and see him."

Anthony went into the desert and came to St Paul's cave. Falling to the ground before the entrance to the cave, he asked to be admitted. The Elders introduced themselves, and then embraced one another. They conversed through the night, and St Anthony revealed how he had been led there by God. St Paul disclosed to St Anthony that for sixty years a bird had brought him half a loaf of bread each day. Now the Lord had sent a double portion in honor of St Paul's visit. The next morning, St Paul spoke to Anthony of his approaching death, and instructed him to bury him. He also asked St Anthony to return to his monastery and bring back the cloak he had received from St Athanasius. He did not really need a garment, but wished to depart from his body while St Anthony was absent.

As he was returning with the cloak, St Anthony beheld the soul of St Paul surrounded by angels, prophets, and apostles, shining like the sun and ascending to God. He entered the cave and found Abba Paul on his knees with his arms outstretched. St Anthony mourned for him, and wrapped him in the cloak. He wondered how he would bury the body, for he had not remembered to bring a shovel. Two lions came running from the wilderness and dug a grave with their claws.

St Anthony buried the holy Elder, and took his garment of palm leaves, then he returned to his own monastery. St Anthony kept this garb as a precious inheritance, and wore it only twice a year, on Pascha and Pentecost.

AT THE SMALL ENTRANCE WE SING

ΑΝΑΣΤΑΣΙΜΟΝ. ΑΠΟΛΥ. ΗΧΟΣ ΠΑ. Β.

Ἄγγελικαὶ δυνάμεις ἐπὶ τὸ μνήμᾳ σου, καὶ οἱ Ἀφυλάσσοιτες ἀπενεκρώθησαν· καὶ ἴστατο Μαρία ἐν τῷ τάφῳ, ζητοῦσα τὸ ἄχραντόν σου σώμα. Ἐσκύλευσας τὸν ἄδην, μὴ πειρασθεὶς ὑπ' αὐτοῦ· ὑπήνησας τῇ Παρθένῳ, δωρούμενος τὴν ζωὴν. Ὁ ἀναστάς ἐκ τῶν νεκρῶν, Κύριε δόξα σοι.

ΑΠΟΛΥΤΙΚΙΟΝ ΤΟΥ ΟΣΙΟΥ. ΗΧΟΣ Δ.

Ἐκ βρέφους τὸν Κύριον, ἐπιποθήσας θερμῶς, τὸν κόσμον κατέλιπες, καὶ τὰ ἐν κόσμῳ τερπνά, καὶ ἡσκησας ἄριστα· ἐπηξας τὴν καλύβην, πρὸ πυλῶν σῶν γονέων· ἐθραυσας τῶν δαιμόνων, τὰς ἐνέδρας Παμμάρκαρ· διὸ σε Ἰωάννη Χριστός, ἀξίως ἐδόξασεν.

ΑΠΟΛΥΤΙΚΙΟΝ ΤΟΥ ΝΑΟΥ. ΠΑ. Α'.

Λουκάν τον πανύμνητον καὶ ἅγιον ἀπόστολον, τὸν τῆς Ἐκκλησίας γνωστὸν συνθέτην τῶν Πράξεων τῶν Ἀποστόλων, τὸν τε σεμνὸν τοῦ Εὐαγγελίου Χριστοῦ ὑπομνηματιστήν, ἀξίως τιμῶμεν ὑμνοῖς ὁσίοις, ὡς νοσημάτων ἀνθρωπίνων καὶ φυσικῶν ἀσθενειῶν θεραπευτήν, τὸν καθαίροντα πληγὰς τοῦ πνεύματος, καὶ ἀδιαλείπτως πρεσβεύοντα ὑπὲρ τῶν ψυχῶν ἡμῶν.

ΚΟΝΤΑΚΙΟΝ. ΗΧΟΣ Α.

Ὁ μήτραν παρθενικὴν * ἀγίασας τῷ τόκῳ σου * καὶ χεῖρας τοῦ Συμεῶν * εὐλόγησας, ὡς ἔπρεπε, * προφθάσας καὶ νῦν * ἔσωσας ἡμᾶς, Χριστέ ὁ Θεός. * Ἄλλ' εἰρήνευσον * ἐν πολέμοις τὸ πολίτευμα * καὶ κραταίωσον * βασιλεῖς, οὓς ἠγάπησας, * ὁ μόνος φιλόανθρωπος.

RESURRECTIONAL APOLYTIKION. MODE 6.

When the angelic powers appeared at Your grave, the soldiers guarding it feared and became as dead. And stand- ing by the sepulcher was Mary who was seeking Your immaculate body. You devastated Hades, not afflicted by it. You went to meet the virgin, and granted eternal life. You resurrected from the dead. O Lord, glory to You.

ΑΠΟΛΥΤΙΚΙΟΝ ΤΟΥ ΕΥΣΕΒΟΥΣ. ΜΟΔΟΣ 4.

From infancy fervently you loved and longed for the Lord; * you therefore renounced the world and every worldly delight, * and excelled in ascetic feats. * You set the hut you dwelt in before the gates of your parents. * Therein, all-blessed struggler, you crushed the snares of the demons. * And therefore, O John, Christ has glorified you worthily.

ΑΠΟΛΥΤΙΚΙΟΝ ΓΙΑ ΤΗΝ ΕΚΚΛΗΣΙΑ. ΜΟΔΟΣ 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.

ΚΟΝΤΑΚΙΟΝ. ΜΟΔΟΣ 1.

You sanctified the virginal womb by Your birth, O Lord, and blessed the hands of Symeon fittingly, O Christ God; and even now You came and saved us. Now, give peace to our Nation in time of war, and empower our Leaders, so loved by You, the only one who loves humanity.

THE READINGS OF THE DAY

EPISTLE READING

THE LETTER OF PAUL TO THE COLOSSIANS 3:4-11

BRETHREN, when Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory. Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: fornication, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. On account of these the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience. In these you once walked, when you lived in them. But now put them all away; anger, wrath, malice, slander, and foul talk from your mouth. Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old nature with its practices and have put on the new nature, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator. Here there cannot be Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free man, but Christ is all, and in all.

GOSPEL READING

LUKE 17:12-19

At that time, as Jesus entered a village, He was met by ten lepers, who stood at a distance and lifted up their voices and said: "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us." When He saw them He said to them, "Go and show yourselves to the priests." And as they went they were cleansed. Then one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, praising God with a loud voice; and he fell on his face at Jesus's feet, giving Him thanks. Now he was a Samaritan. Then said Jesus: "Were not ten cleansed? Where are the nine? Was no one found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?" And He said to him: "Rise and go your way; your faith has made you well."

“Now that the common Savior of all has died on our behalf, we who believe in Christ no longer die, as men died aforetime, in fulfillment of the threat of the law. That condemnation has come to an end; and now that, by the grace of the resurrection, corruption has been banished and done away, we are loosed from our mortal bodies in God's good time for each, so that we may obtain thereby a better resurrection. Like seeds cast into the earth, we do not perish in our dissolution, but like them shall rise again, death having been brought to nought by the grace of the Savior. That is why blessed Paul, through whom we all have surety of the resurrection, says: "This corruptible must put on incorruption and this mortal must put on immortality; but when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, 'Death is swallowed up in victory. O Death, where is thy sting? O Grave, where is thy victory?'"

—SAINT ATHANASIOS THE GREAT (296 – 373)”

ANNOUNCEMENTS

MEMORIAL SERVICE: Sophia Pardalos, 40 days

UPCOMING CHURCH SERVICES:

Tuesday, January 17, Saint Anthony the Great, Orthros / Divine Liturgy, 8:30am

Wednesday, January 18, Ss. Athanasios and Cyril the Great, Orthros / Divine Liturgy, 8:30am

HOUSE BLESSINGS

If you would like your house blessed, please see the sign-up sheets in the Narthex.

PHILOPTOCHOS MEETING

Can you help please help us with the supply drive for Ronald McDonald House? Drop your supplies off in the Narthex of the Church.

CRAFT CLUB

The next meeting of the craft club will be on Tuesday, January 17 at 6pm.

MEMORIAL LUNCHEON

Following services, a meal in her honor of Sophia Pardalos will be held at Peachtree Banquet Center. All are welcome to attend.

STEWARDSHIP MATERIALS

Have you returned your 2012 Stewardship materials? If not, please do so as soon as possible. Your generous support is what keeps our parish ministries functioning.. Thank you!

WINTER / SPRING CATECHISM CLASS

The next meeting of the Winter / Spring Catechism class will be Thursday January 19, at 6:30pm.

“As, then, he who desires to see God Who by nature is invisible and not to be beheld, may yet perceive and know Him through His works, so too let him who does not see Christ with his understanding at least consider Him in His bodily works and test whether they be of man or God. If they be of man, then let him scoff; but if they be of God, let him not mock at things which are no fit subject for scorn, but rather let him recognize the fact and marvel that things divine have been revealed to us by such humble means, that through death deathlessness has been made known to us, and through the Incarnation of the Word the Mind whence all things proceed has been declared, and its Agent and Ordainer, the Word of God Himself. He, indeed, assumed humanity that we might become God. He manifested Himself by means of a body in order that we might perceive the Mind of the unseen Father. He endured shame from men that we might inherit immortality..”

— SAINT ATHANASIOS
THE GREAT (296 – 373)

SYNAXARION

St Paul of Thebes died in the year 341, when he was 113 years old. He did not establish a single monastery, but soon after his end there were many imitators of his life, and they filled the desert with monasteries. St Paul is honored as the first desert-dweller and hermit.

In the twelfth century St Paul's relics were transferred to Constantinople and placed in the Peribleptos monastery of the Mother of God, on orders of the emperor Manuel (1143-1180). Later, they were taken to Venice, and finally to Hungary, at Ofa. Part of his head is in Rome.

Saint John the Hut-Dweller was the son of rich and illustrious parents, and was born in Constantinople the early fifth century. He received a fine education, and he mastered rhetoric and philosophy by the age of twelve. He also loved to read spiritual books. Perceiving the vanity of worldly life, he chose the path that was narrow and extremely difficult. Filled with longing to enter a monastery, he confided his intention to a passing monk. John made him promise to come back for him when he returned from his pilgrimage to Jerusalem, and take him to his monastery.

He asked his parents for a Gospel so that he might study the words of Christ. John's parents hired a calligrapher to copy the text, and had the volume bound in a golden cover studded with gems. John read the Gospel constantly, delighting in the Savior's words.

The monk kept his promise to come back for John, and they went secretly to Bithynia. At the monastery of the "Unsleeping" (Akoimitoi), he received monastic tonsure. The young monk began his ascetical labors with zeal, astonishing the brethren

with his unceasing prayer, humble obedience, strict abstinence, and perseverance at work.

After six years, he began to undergo temptations. He remembered his parents, how much they loved him, and what sorrow he caused them. He regretted leaving them, and was filled with a burning desire to see them again.

St John explained his situation to the igumen St Marcellus (December 29) and he asked to be released from the monastery. He begged the igumen for his blessing and prayers to return home. He bid farewell to the brethren, hoping that by their prayers and with the help of God, he would both see his parents and overcome the snares of the devil. The igumen then blessed him for his journey.

St John returned to Constantinople, not to resume his former life of luxury, but dressed as a beggar, and unknown to anyone. He settled in a corner by the gates of his parents' home. His father noticed the "pauper," and began to send him food from his table, for the sake of Christ. John lived in a small hut for three years, oppressed and insulted by the servants, enduring cold and frost, unceasingly conversing with the Lord and the holy angels.

Before his death, the Lord appeared to the monk in a vision, revealing that the end of his sorrows was approaching, and that in three days he would be taken into the Heavenly Kingdom. Therefore, he asked the steward to give his mother a message to come to him, for he had something to say to her.

At first, she did not wish to go, but she was curious to know what this beggar had to say to her. Then he sent her another message, saying that he would die in three days. John thanked her for the charity he had received, and told her that God would reward her for it. He then made her promise to bury

him beneath his hut, dressed in his rags. Only then did the saint give her his Gospel, which he always carried with him, saying, "May this console you in this life, and guide you to the next life."

She showed the Gospel to her husband, saying that it was similar to the one they had given their son. He realized that it was, in fact, the very Gospel they had commissioned for John. They went back to the gates, intending to ask the pauper where he got the Gospel, and if he knew anything about their son. Unable to restrain himself any longer, he admitted that he was their child. With tears of joy they embraced him, weeping because he had endured privation for so long at the very gates of his parental home.

The saint died in the mid-fifth century, when he was not quite twenty-five years old. On the place of his burial the parents built a church, and beside it a hostel for strangers. When they died, they were buried in the church they had built.

In the twelfth century the head of the saint was taken by Crusaders to Besançon (in France), and other relics of the saint were taken to Rome.

The Monk Martyr Pansophius, was a son of the Alexandrian proconsul Nilus. After the death of his father, he distributed his inheritance to the poor and settled in the desert, where he lived in asceticism for twenty-seven years.

During the persecution by Decius (249-251) St Pansophius was brought to trial before the prefect of Alexandria. The monk boldly confessed his faith in Christ and denounced pagan errors, for which he was fiercely beaten with rods. He died from these beatings, thereby receiving a martyr's crown (249-251).

Saint Ita, "the Foster Mother of the Irish Saints," was born in the fifth century. She, like many of the Irish saints, was of the nobility. Her parents were devout Christians who lived in County Waterford.

She founded a school and convent at Kiledy (Cille Ide) which still bears her name near Newcastle West in Co. Limerick. A holy well still marks the site of her church.

When she decided to settle in Kileedy, a local chieftain offered her a grant of land for the support of the convent. St Ita accepted four icons, which she cultivated. The convent became known as a training ground for young boys, many of whom became famous churchmen. She received St Brendan the Voyager (May 16) when he was only a year old, and kept him until he was six. She also cared for her nephew St Mochaemhoch (March 13) in his infancy. She called him "Pulcherius," because he was such a handsome child.

Many people sought her spiritual counsels, and she also seems to have practiced medicine to some degree. Her life was spent in repentance and asceticism.

St Ita once told St Brendan that the three things most displeasing to God are: A face that hates mankind, a will that clings to the love of evil, and placing one's entire trust in riches (Compare Proverbs 6:16-19).

The three things most pleasing to God are: The firm belief of a pure heart in God, the simple religious life, and liberality with charity.

St Ita fell asleep in the Lord in 570. Her Feast Day is a local holiday in the district, and her name is a popular one for Irish girls.

ON DESPAIR AND THE SPIRITUAL STRUGGLE

On Combating Despair from the Evergetinos

A brother asked an elder:

“Father, to what does the Prophet refer when he says, ‘There is no salvation for him in his God’ (Psalm 3:3)?”

The elder gave the following response to the brother’s inquiry:

“He is referring to thoughts of despair, which the demons place before the sinner, saying: ‘Neither now nor hereafter is it possible for God to save you.’ With such counsel they try cast the sinner into despair. But a person must contrast these thoughts with the words of the Holy Scriptures: ‘Mine eyes are ever toward the Lord, for He shall pluck my feet out of the snare’ (Psalm 24:15).”

The below passage is from “Way of the Ascetics,” by Tito Colliander. This selection is the chapter entitled, “On Times of Darkness,” those times of spiritual depression and abandonment that we all experience from time to time.

The weather shifts from cloudy to clear and then back to rain; thus it is with human nature. One must always expect clouds to hide the sun sometimes. Even the saints have had their dark hours, days and weeks. They say then that “God has left them” in order that they may know truly how utterly wretched they are of themselves, without His support. These times of darkness, when all seems meaningless, ridiculous and vain, when one is beset by doubt and temptations, are inevitable. But even these times can be harvested for good.

The dark days can best be conquered by following the example of St. Mary of Egypt. For forty-eight years she dwelt in the desert beyond Jordan,

and when temptations befell her and memories of her former sinful life in Alexandria beckoned her to leave her voluntary sojourn in the desert, she lay on the ground, cried to God for help and did not get up until her heart was humbled. The first years were hard; she sometimes had to lie this way for many days; but after seventeen years came the time of rest.

On such days stay quiet. Do not be persuaded to go out into social life or entertainment. Do not pity yourself, seek comfort in nothing but your cry to the Lord: “Haste thee, O God, to deliver me! Makes haste to help me, O Lord (Psalm 70:1)! I am so fast in prison that I cannot get forth (Psalm 88:8),” and other such appeals. You cannot expect real help from any other source. For the sake of chance relief do not throw away all your winnings. Pull the covers over your head; now your patience and steadfastness are being tried. If you endure the trial, thank God who gave you the strength. If you do not, rise up promptly, pray for mercy and think: I got what I deserved! For the fall itself was your punishment. You had relied too much on yourself, and now you see what it led to. You have had an experience; do not forget to give thanks.

St Ephraim the Syrian (ca. 306 – 373) was a prolific hymnographer and theologian of the 4th century. St Ephraim wrote a wide variety of hymns, poems, and sermons in verse, as well as prose biblical exegesis. These were works of practical theology for the edification of the Church in troubled times. St Ephraim’s works witness to an early form of Christianity in which western ideas take little part. His works are read extensively during Great Lent services in Orthodox monasteries along with the best

known of his writings, the Prayer of Saint Ephrem, which is recited at every service during Great Lent.

O Lord and Master of my life, give me not the spirit of sloth, idle curiosity (meddling), lust for power and idle talk.

But grant unto me, Thy servant, a spirit of chastity (integrity), humility, patience and love.

Yea, O Lord and King, grant me to see mine own faults and not to judge my brother. For blessed art Thou unto the ages of ages. Amen.

Take care, my brothers and sisters, for the Evil One wars against spiritual strugglers in sundry ways. He works against man with unimaginably hypocritical cleverness. Thus, before a sin is committed, the Enemy diminishes its significance in the eye of strugglers. More than any other sin, he puts before them the desire for fleshly pleasure as such a small thing that, prior to succumbing to it, it appears as insignificant to the conscience of a brother or sister as throwing a glass of cold water on the ground. When, however, the fleshly desire is fulfilled, then the Evil One greatly puffs up the sin in the conscience of the sinner, kindling in his soul numberless thoughts of despair, like black waves from Hell, so that the brother's good thoughts of repentance are submerged and he is hurled into the depths of hopelessness. Seeing from the foregoing, my brothers and sisters, the machinations of the Enemy, take care not to be duped in some misdeed, persisting in it and despairing of your salvation; rather, after rising from your fall, return to the Lord your God. And be confident that He will have compassion on you, for our Lord is tender-hearted and full of compassion, rich in mercy and long-suffering, and He does not punish those who sincerely repent, but immediately greets them with joy.

Therefore, when the Enemy of your soul whispers, "You have lost all, you cannot be saved," an-

swer him: "I do not despair of my salvation, for I have a compassionate and long-suffering God. And this conviction upholds me in my belief that He Who commanded that we forgive our fellow man for his transgressions against us even seven times seventy that

He, by the same token, will forgive the sins of all who with their whole souls turn to Him." With such reflections and with the Grace of God, most assuredly all warfare with Satan will depart from you.

From St. Theophan the Recluse

How many times already have you been made aware of the duty which your conscience dictates to you - the duty to remain with the Lord, not preferring anything else to Him? Perhaps your awareness of this duty no longer ever leaves you. May the actual practise of it likewise prevail constantly within you; for this, after all, is our true aim.

When we are with the Lord, the Lord too is with us, and everything is bright. When the window curtains are drawn apart in a room and the sun shines, the room is full of light. If you draw the curtain over one window it will be darker, and when you draw them all, the room will be in total darkness.

It is the same with the soul. When it is turned towards God with all its powers and feelings, everything is bright, joyful, and calm. But when it turns its attention and feeling to something else, this brightness diminishes. The greater the number of things that occupy the soul, the greater the darkness that invades it; and then complete darkness may result.

It is not so much thoughts that bring darkness, but feelings. While a single instance of being carried away by feelings is less likely to bring darkness than is a continued passionate attachment to some object. The greatest darkness of all comes from external acts of sin.