



Fire & Light

St. Symeon Orthodox Church

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Visit stsymeon.com

✠ **November 11, 2012** ✠

Great Martyr Menas of Egypt (304)

St. Theodore the Studite (826)

Martyrs Victor & Stephanida at Damascus (160), Martyr Vincent of Spain (304)

St. Martin of Tours (397), Blessed Maximus, Fool-for-Christ of Moscow (1433)



🔔 **Many Years! ...To the Newly-Illumined:** 🔔

**Sarah and her children Hope, Theodore & Samuel Reese
and Jeremiah Burton!**

✠ **Wed. Nov. 14 6:30pm Akathist Service**

⇒ **New Inquirer's Class – Begins Tuesday, November 27 – 6:30pm**

Having taught us...

"Having taught us - through His sacrifice and sufferings - to have patience in afflictions, through the coming of the Spirit He bestowed upon us those things which *'eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither has entered into the heart of man'* [I Cor. 2:9], and took upon Himself the tribulations that were our due. He was reviled, mocked, slandered, slapped, bound, delivered to Pilate, buffeted, given vinegar and gall to drink --- and what more shall I say? He was pierced with nails, crucified, and transfixed by a lance; and in this way, sharing with us in flesh and spirit and deigning to suffer for our sake, He again entrusted this law to His own: to the Apostles, Fathers and Patriarchs --- instructing - through the Holy Spirit - the Prophets and Patriarchs that came before Him, and - through His immaculate Body - those that came after Him."

St. Mark the Ascetic

Through Prayer, Silence and Love

✠ All things are achieved through prayer, silence and love. Have you understood the effects of prayer? Love in prayer, love in Christ. That is what is truly beneficial. As long as you love your children with human love - which is often pathological - the more they will be mixed-up, and the more their behavior will be negative. But when the love between you and towards your children is holy and Christian love, then you will have no problem. The sanctity of the parents saves the children. For this to come about, divine grace must act on the souls of the parents. No one can be sanctified on his own. The same divine grace will then illuminate warm and animate the souls of the children.

+ Elder Porphyrios the Kapsokalivite (+1991)

When you love Him

✠ The fear of God is when you love Him, when you truly love Him with all your heart and you strive never to offend or sadden Him - not only with your deeds, actions, and words, but also with your thoughts. You try to please Him in everything you do or say. That is the fear of God - the fear of doing anything that might sadden or offend our Parent.

+Elder Thaddeus of Serbia (+2003)

This and That

Men grab power when they can. Once grabbed, it stays grabbed. A police operation like DHS will always try to grow. People in power always think they know best. When a federal department has money, industry rushes to sell it things.
Fred Reed

Calvinism, he wrote, was the mother of atheism because it presented God as unchristian, unloving, and unlovable.
Tom Fleming, paraphrasing Thomas Jefferson

I've been driven to my knees (in prayer) many times by the overwhelming conviction that I had nowhere else to go.
— Abraham Lincoln, as quoted by Ronald Reagan

The First Amendment of the Constitution (Ed. protecting freedom of worship among other important freedoms) was not written to protect people and their laws from religious values, it was written to protect those values from government tyranny.
Ronald Reagan

I have said that we must be cautious in claiming that God is on our side. I think the real question we must answer is, 'Are we on God's side?'
Ronald Reagan

As for "professing the same religion," the Christianity of the Founding Fathers has been purged from all public institutions. One in 5 Americans profess no religious faith. The mainline Protestant churches — the Episcopal, Methodist, Lutheran and Presbyterian — have been losing congregants for a half-century. Secularism is the religion of the elites. It alone is promulgated in public schools.
Patrick Buchanan

Intolerant new orthodoxy

Half the nation believes it is the duty of government to feed, house, educate and medicate the population and endlessly extract from the well-to-do whatever is required to make everybody more equal. Egalitarianism has triumphed over freedom. Hierarchy, the natural concomitant of freedom, is seen as undemocratic.

Do we all seek to live by the same moral code? Abortion, a felony in the 1950s, is now a constitutional right. Homosexual marriage, an absurdity not long ago, is the civil rights cause du jour. Dissent from the intolerant new orthodoxy and you are a bigot, a hater, a homophobe, an enemy of women's rights.
Patrick Buchanan

Nor are we (Americans) unique in sensing that we are no longer one....All over the world, peoples are disaggregating along the lines of creed, culture, tribe and faith.
Patrick Buchanan

My beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ Jesus, how can an Orthodox Christian, whose Faith - time and again - was freed from oppression by the blood of millions of Martyrs, vote for someone whose words and actions defy religious freedom? My precious sojourners on the sea of life, how can an Orthodox Christian, whose Lord and Savior Jesus Christ began His miracles at a traditional wedding in Cana, vote for individuals who seek the legalization of same-sex unions, as well as promote the teaching of their unnatural lifestyles in all grades of the public school system? My very dear companions on the *narrow path* to Paradise, how can an Orthodox Christian, whose Lord - the Logos, Who created the entire Universe out of nothing - took upon Himself our flesh in the womb of the Virgin (thereby sanctifying the entire pre-born state of all children), vote for a politician who believes it is alright to murder the most innocent of God's children --- both inside *and* outside the womb of their mothers?

- Fr. Demetrios Carellas, Nativity of the Theotokos Monastery, Saxonburg, PA

The Grace of our Baptism {*Life Transfigured, Holy Transfiguration Monastery*}

“As many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ!”

This hymn, taken from the Epistle of St. Paul to the Galatians (3:27), reminds us of the profound gift and honor we receive through holy Baptism. The hymn is sung at the Baptismal service itself when the priest leads the newly-illuminated Christian around the Baptismal font. Whether we receive Baptism as an infant being held in our godparent’s arms or as an adult after a period of searching and study, the same special Grace is bestowed. In Orthodox practice, immediately after our Baptism we also receive holy Chrismation, the seal of the gift of the Holy Spirit. This is our personal Pentecost, when our particular gifts are received.

As members of Christ’s Body, the Church, we bear a great responsibility that is forever ours as a result of this blessing. As the Apostle Peter reminds us, in Christ we have become. “A chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light” (1 Pet. 2:9).

We “put on Christ,” we are His temple, we hold Him always inside ourselves. This awesome reality calls us to respect both ourselves—and one another—probably more than we do. No matter what challenges we face we can turn to Christ dwelling within us, asking His help. How often we feel weak, helpless, timid, unsure of what to say or do, or how to help ourselves and others; He can help us move through these feelings of inadequacy. We have a great strength inside us—a strength that is Christ Himself. As St. Paul wrote: “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me” (Phil. 4:13).

The Church nurtures our life in Christ, teaching us and providing us with the tools necessary to grow in “wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man” (Li. 2:52). Often we emphasize repentance, fasting, and long prayers as a means of correcting our sinfulness. However it is essential that we not lose sight of the transformative power of the great gifts and grace we possess by virtue of our Baptism and Chrismation. In this way our daily lives will reflect our continuing intention to carry this responsibility.

Receiving Baptism and Chrismation are our first steps on the path to becoming more like God. As the Holy Fathers teach us, “God became man so that men might become gods.” Christ likened Himself “to the body of our lowliness, that He might liken us to the image of His glory” (Liturgy of St. Basil). “God’s Incarnation opens the way to man’s deification... By assuming our humanity, Christ Who is Son of God by nature has made us sons of God by grace” (Bp. Kallistos Ware, *The Orthodox Way*, SVS Press, 1995, p.98). This is an awesome reality of our lives as Christians.

As the world prepares for a secular celebration of Christmas, we can prepare ourselves to renew our life in Christ by reflecting on our Baptism and Chrismation. It is through these Sacraments that the seeds of salvation have been sown in us. Let us continue to live out our Baptism each day, holding ourselves in holy respect and calling upon the grace that is in each of us, serving Him and bringing the joy of knowing Him into the lives of those around us. ✠ ✠ ✠

Born of God

✠ “We who are deemed worthy to participate in Christ through faith are made “partakers of the divine nature” (II Pet. 1:4) and are said to be born of God. We are therefore called gods, not simply by grace because we are winging our way towards the glory that transcends us, but because we already have God dwelling and abiding within us...”

St. Cyril of Alexandria

The Extraordinary Prophecy of St. Nilus the Myrrhstreaming, Athonite Hermit (+1651) (Remembered November 12)

“After the year 1900, toward the middle of the 20th Century, the people of that time will become unrecognizable. When the time for the advent of the Antichrist approaches, people’s minds will grow cloudy from carnal passions, and dishonor and lawlessness will grow stronger. Then the world will become unrecognizable. People’s appearances will change, and it will be impossible to distinguish men from women due to their shamelessness in dress and style of hair. These people will be cruel and will be like wild animals because of the temptations of the Antichrist. There will be no respect for parents and elders, love will disappear, and Christian pastors, bishops and priests will become vain men, completely failing to distinguish the right hand from the left. At that time, the morals and traditions of Christians and of the Church will change. People will abandon modesty, and dissipation will reign. Falsehood and greed will attain great proportions, and woe to those who pile up treasures. Lust, adultery, homosexuality, secret deeds, and murder will rule in society.”

“At that future time, due to the power of such great crimes and licentiousness, people will be deprived of the grace of the Holy Spirit, which they received in Holy Baptism, and equally of remorse.”

“The Churches of God will be deprived of God-fearing and pious pastors and woe to the Christians remaining in the world at that time; they will completely lose their faith because they will lack the opportunity seeing the light of knowledge from anyone at all. Then they will separate themselves out of the world in holy refuges in search of lightening of their spiritual sufferings, but everywhere they will meet obstacles and constraints.”

“And all this will result from the fact that the Antichrist wants to be lord over everything and become the ruler of the whole universe, and he will produce miracles and fantastic signs. He will also give depraved wisdom to an unhappy man so that he will discover a way by which one man can carry on a conversation with another from one end of the earth to the other. At that time men will also fly through the air like birds and descend to the bottom of the sea like fish. And when they have achieved all this, these unhappy people will spend their lives in comfort without knowing, poor souls, the deceit of the Antichrist. And the impious one! – he will so complete science with vanity that it will go off the right path and lead people to lose faith in the existence of God in Three Persons.”

“Then the All-Good God will see the downfall of the human race and will shorten the days for the sake of those few who are being saved, because the enemy wants to lead even the chosen into temptation, if that is possible... then the sword of chastisement will suddenly appear and kill the perverter and his servants.” † † †

Through the prayers of our Holy Father Nilus, Lord Jesus Christ have mercy on us!

✧ He who is insolent towards men is insolent towards God; as many of us are. Respect in man the grand, inestimable image of God and be forbearing towards the faults and errors of fallen man, so that God may be forbearing towards your own, because the enemy of God and of mankind, being unable to vent his malice upon God, endeavors to vent it upon His image – man, as well as his impurities, his darkness, pride, envy, etc. Respect, therefore, man and save him; watch yourself also, do not become irritable, nor malicious, do not envy, do not offend, do not retaliate, do not commit adultery, do not steal, and so on.

St. John of Kronstadt

Scandals must come (Matt. 18:7)...

by Fr. Stephen Freeman, *Glory to God for All Things Blog*

These are the words of Christ. He tells us that scandals are not only likely to happen – but that they will happen. They are necessary.

Most readers will marvel that this is a quote from Jesus. The reason is simple: the Greek is rarely translated in such a manner. “Stumbling blocks,” or “offenses,” is the more common way to render the word skandala. But the Greek has a very simple cognate in English: scandal.

Why would Christ tell his disciples that scandals must come? It is a description of the nature of things in this world. The entrance of the Kingdom of God and its dwelling among men is not such that men will cease to be broken or evil. Christ warned His disciples that he himself would be betrayed – not by strangers – but by one of them!

And this has ever been the case. From the earliest days of the Faith, disciples have been betrayed, misled, robbed, deceived, cheated, taught falsely, raped and abused. There has never been an idyllic season of the Church when such scandals have been absent. In Western Europe where various reform movements have remade Christianity repeatedly – circumstances have presented scandals needing attention – but reforms have never succeeded in ending them. Christ’s words remain true regardless.

Of course, no religious group is free of scandal – I am not as familiar with those of others as I am of our own – but everybody’s got them. And the non-religious are as scandal-ridden as the religious. Hypocrisy is equal opportunity. The problem does not lie within religion or its absence – it is an inherent part of the human condition.

What of Christ’s words? Are scandals part of some Divine Plan? I think that would take his words in the wrong way. The passage begins with the warning, “Woe to the world because of scandals!” and concludes, “Woe to that man by whom the scandal comes!” Of course, the great scandal, is the “falling away,” warned of by Christ and the apostles.

[Christ, speaking of the time of great troubles] And then many will be scandalized, and will betray one another, and will hate one another (Matt. 24:10).

And St. Paul:

[Speaking of the coming of Christ] Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first... (2 Thess. 2:3)

We can speculate about the internal nature of the great scandal or the falling away. But there is no New Testament version of the Christian Faith that does not contain this aspect. It is part of the most primitive layer of Apostolic Tradition. It is part of Christ’s own teaching.

My experience as a Christian has been that everything “rhymes” with the larger picture of the faith. We can speak about the “last days,” and waste time speculating about such things. But Christian history has been replete with days that fit the pattern offered for those times. There is no Christian journey that is without scandal and a falling away. If we do not fall away, it is not because it never crossed our mind. Everyman in the course of a lifetime has the chance to be Peter or Judas.

If there is an inner necessity to the scandal, it is not within the scandal itself. The inner necessity is within us. The temptation that accompanies scandal is something that must be faced and overcome. Apparently, we cannot enter the kingdom of God without it.

Scandal (a "cause of stumbling") comes in many forms. It can be as bold as corruption in the hierarchy, or moral turpitude within a priest. It can also be a prayer that we perceive to have been unanswered or God's strange absence when we thought we could count on him. Anything that causes us to lose heart, to quit, to abandon the journey qualifies as scandal.

We admire the great martyrs and the courage of their suffering. But in most lives, suffering has a very banal quality: it offers us little chance to play the hero. I am very fond of the books on the life and work of Father Arseny. His stories are those of a saint in the Soviet Gulag. Some of the stories are quite miraculous, but most are born of the grace-filled ability to bear the innumerable indignities of a single hour, day after day. Such martyrdom over a period of decades is frightfully boring and tedious. And it is the boredom and tedium that become the scandal that he endured.

Scandal tests and proves the life of the heart. A life lived in the mind (thoughts and emotions) will endure scandal only with the greatest difficulty. Whatever the insult created by an actual scandal, the mind and the emotions will magnify it, rehearse it, argue with it, judge it, replay it repeatedly, become angry and despondent. The work of the mind is much harder to bear than the scandal itself. We are scandalized by our own passions.

The heart does not seek to judge. It understands the nature of righteousness and is not surprised by the presence of sin.

However, I take heart that Christ's warning concerning the scandal that must come offers no condemnation for those who fall. His truly serious warning is for the one through whom the scandal comes. We all fall (at least everyone I know falls). I pray that when I stumble, I take no one with me. God give us grace.

I find these two prayers (from Orthodox Daily Prayers) to be of great help:

Save, Lord, and have mercy on those whom I have caused to stumble, turning them away from the path of salvation and leading them to evil and unseemly deeds. Return them to the path of salvation by Thy Divine Providence.

Save, Lord, and have mercy on those who hate and offend me, and do me harm. Do not let them perish because of me.

✘ **We must live like the Saints themselves and imitate their works. When we become like them and live the common life, we can understand what God has revealed to them. And by being closely knit to them, we can escape the danger of sinners and fire at the Day of Judgment. We can receive what is stored up in the Kingdom of Heaven for the Saints. Such treasure, "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have they entered into the heart of man." These things are prepared for those who live a righteous life and who love God and Christ Jesus our Lord.**

~ St. Athanasius the Great

"Our crisis is not sociological, it is *theological*. Forsake God and life becomes god-forsaken. Indeed, one will learn quickly that hell is real if he lives as if heaven is not."

~ Fr. John Oliver

St. Nectarios the Wonderworker of Pentapolis – November 9.

St. Nectarios was born on October 1, 1846, in Selevria of Thrace and was named Anastasios (Kephalos). He was from a poor humble family but a God-fearing one. At the age of 14, he was forced to go to Constantinople to find work in order to assist their financial condition. He would spend his spare time reading the writings of the Holy Fathers. Such was the zeal that enflamed his heart, that while working in a tobacco store, he would write some of their sayings on the paper bags in which cigarettes were sold, so that the buyers would also be able to read them and be edified.

In 1866, he moved to the isle of Chios, where he found employment in a village school. Seven years later he joined the brotherhood of Nea Moni, an 11th century monastery on the island. Here he was guided by the blessed Elder Pachomios. After 3 years, he was tonsured and named Lazarus, but a year later he was ordained hierodeacon by Metropolitan Gregory of Chios and according to custom renamed again, this time Nectarios.

He then went to Athens to complete his education, and at the end of his studies, he went to Alexandria, Egypt, where he received sponsorship from the Patriarch, Sophronios IV. He urged him to enroll at the School of Theology at Athens University, and receiving a blessing from his monastery at Nea Moni, he did so.

After graduating, he returned to Alexandria and was ordained priest by Sophronios. Three years later, in Cairo, he was consecrated Metropolitan of Pentapolis in Egypt. Such was his ministry that he became greatly beloved and admired by his flock and by others. This love and admiration in turn aroused jealousy and envy amongst his peers. They accused him of false piety and of seeking after the throne of Alexandria. All this malice led to the suspension of the Saint from ecclesiastical functions and in having him removed from his see. The Saint went to live in Greece, where, as a bishop without a see and apparently discredited, he was only able to find a preaching position on the island of Euboea, where clerical jealousy again attacked him. Then a friend got him a teaching appointment, becoming the director of the Rizarios School in Athens. However, the life of St. Nectarios would continue to be filled with distress, maltreatment and human suffering.

At this period, as throughout the greater part of his life, he was instrumental in publishing a number of edifying and instructive papers on the Orthodox Faith and practice. In December 1908, he resigned as director of the school, and settled on the island of Aegina (pronounced "Egg-eena"), where he had founded the Holy Trinity Convent, which now enshrines his sacred and wonderworking relics. He himself served as the priest of the Monastery, yet did not cease his publishing work. At the end of his life he suffered from prostatitis and for a long time would not seek medical help until prevailed upon to do so by his nuns.

He was admitted into the hospital where he reposed in the Lord on November 8, 1920, at the age of 74 (His feast was moved to the 9th to be separate from the Feast of the Holy Archangels on November 8). He was in a ward for the poor. When they removed his cardigan and begun to prepare his body for burial, they carelessly threw it onto the next bed where the patient there, who had been a paralytic for many years, was immediately healed. A fragrance then filled the room where the Saint's body lay. The same day the body was transported to Aegina to be laid to rest.

After five months, wishing to entomb the body of their founder more fittingly, the sisters exhumed the Saint, and found his relics intact and fragrant. Three years later, the

relics were again uncovered and found to be incorrupt. The Archbishop of Athens was informed and ordered that they be entombed until seven years had elapsed from his repose and then again inspected.

In his lifetime, St. Nectarios was known to be humble, meek, kindly and extremely charitable and compassionate; since his repose this service of love has continued and increased because literally thousands of miracles of healing have been worked through his relics and through his intercessions. His convent, as poor during the Saint's lifetime, has become one of the most beloved places of pilgrimage in Greece, and the faithful from all over the world have recourse to his prayers.

His prophecy to the nuns upon the founding of the monastery was fulfilled: "*I am building a lighthouse for you, and God will put the light in it that shall shine unto the breadth and length of the whole world. Many shall see the light and come here to Aegina.*" Through the prayers of St. Nectarios, Lord Jesus Christ our God, have mercy on us!

A Love Letter

One of the most moving and memorable documents of the Civil War is the letter below of Major Sullivan Ballou to his wife Sarah from the battlefield. A testimony of love, honor, and courage in the face of the mystery of life and death!

My Very Dear Sarah:

The indications are very strong that we shall move in a few days—perhaps tomorrow. Lest I should not be able to write again, I feel impelled to write a few lines that may fall under your eye when I shall be no more. . . .

I have no misgivings about or lack of confidence in the cause in which I am engaged, and my courage does not halt or falter. I know how strongly American civilization now leans on the triumph of the Government, and how great a debt we owe to those who went before us through the blood and suffering of the Revolution. And I am willing, perfectly willing, to lay down all my joys in this life to help maintain this Government and to pay that debt. . . .

Sarah, my love for you is deathless: it seems to bind me with mighty cables that nothing but Omnipotence could break, and yet my love for country comes over me like a strong wind and bears me irresistibly on, with all these chains to the battle-field.

The memories of all the blissful moments I have spent with you come creeping over me, and I feel most deeply grateful to God, and you, that I have enjoyed them so long. And how hard it is for me to give them up and burn to ashes the hopes of future years, when, God willing, we might still have lived and loved together and seen our sons grown up to honorable manhood around us. If I do not [return], my dear Sarah, never forget how much I love you, and when my last breath escapes me on the battle-field, it will whisper your name. Forgive my many faults and the many pains I have caused you. How thoughtless, how foolish I have often-times been. . . .

O Sarah, if the dead can come back to this earth and flit unseen around those they loved, I shall always be near you in the gladdest day and in the darkest night, amidst your happiest scenes and gloomiest hours—always, always: and if there be a soft breeze upon your cheek, it shall be my breath, or the cool air cools your throbbing temple, it shall be my spirit passing by.

Sarah, do not mourn me dead: think I am gone, and wait for me, for we shall meet again. . . .

Sullivan¹

Major Ballou was killed one week later at the first battle of Bull Run.