



St. George Antiochian Orthodox Church
 Weekly Newsletter
 Sunday, December 13, 2020

11th Sunday of Luke

Colossians 3:4-11

Luke 14:16-24

Parish Directory Update

We are currently updating our parish directory, and we want to be sure we have the most up to date contact information for each household. Letters will be sent via email for those whom we have emails on file and via mail for the rest. When you receive the letter, please review the information we have on file, make corrections as needed, and provide any missing information. If you do not receive a letter, it means we have no mail/email contact information on file for you – please contact the office to provide your information. You may either mail the completed form back to the church or [email it to the office](#).

Upcoming Meetings

- Parish Council – Sunday 12/13 at 1pm
The office will send the meeting link
- Choir Practice - Tuesday 12/15 at 7pm
Contact [Matt Gordon](#) for link

Philly OCF

- Bible study - Tuesday 12/29, 11am
[Zoom link](#)
Mtg ID #880 5713 0161
Password: Scripture
- Regular meetings will resume in January after winter break – check back here for the date

- The following services will be held in the church and streamed on the [website](#):
 - **Tuesday 12/8** – Matins, 9am
 - **Tuesday 12/8** - Akathist, 7pm ([email Dn. Joseph](#))
 - **Thursday 12/10** – 3rd Hour, 9:30am
 - **Saturday 12/12** – Vespers, 5pm
 - **Sunday 12/13** – Orthros and Liturgy, 9:30am
- To attend one of the services listed above at the church, please sign up via Sign Up Genius ([December services](#)).

When doing so, please keep in mind the following:

- reserve the number of slots for family members attending (For example, if there are 3 household members attending, reserve 3 slots.)
- those who are elderly, have pre-existing conditions, or currently are not feeling well are asked to remain home.
- children who are too young to keep a mask on are asked to remain home.
- To set up a time to receive communion, please sign up via the [Sign Up Genius](#). Please reserve only one slot per household unit. Prior to arriving at the church for communion, please say the [Morning Prayers](#) and the [Prayers of Preparation before Communion](#).
- Confession is also being scheduled by appointment. To set up an appointment, please email the church office and provide a few dates/times you are available. The office will email you to confirm your appointment time.

Troparion of St. George

O liberator and deliverer of captives, helper of the poor and needy, a healing physician of the sick, a contender for kings, O great among Martyrs, the victory-clad George; intercede with Christ our God for the salvation of our souls.

If you attend a service, you must wear a mask/face covering out of care for ourselves, our brothers and sisters in Christ, and our neighbors.

Holiday Flowers

If you would like to make a donation for Nativity flowers, please make a donation online or via cash/check to the church. Please send a list of those the flowers are in honor of and in memory of, as well as which of the people are Orthodox and non-Orthodox on the list to the [church office](#). Fr. Joel will remember them in prayers from Nativity through Theophany.

Wisdom of the Holy Fathers

No one heals himself by wounding another.

+ St. Ambrose of Milan

Church History

This week we continue a series on the Essentials of Faith. The hope is that we can all learn and be edified and come to a “knowledge of the Truth” (1 Tim. 2:4), and to witness to the things of faith that were “delivered to the saints” (Jud. 1:3) in the Church, which is the “pillar and ground of Truth”. (1 Tim. 3:15) May God bless the labor. These lessons are taken from Fr. Thomas Hopko’s series The Orthodox Faith.

Russia: Missionary Activity - Alaska (cont.)

From Saint Herman’s conversation with 25 Russian naval officers

“And do you love God?” the Elder then asked.

All replied: “Of course, we love God. How can one not love God?”

“And I, a sinful one, for more than forty years have been striving to love God, and I cannot say that I perfectly love Him,” answered Father Herman; and he began to show how one should love God, “If we love someone,” he said, “we always think of him, strive to please him, and day and night our heart is occupied with this. Is this the way you, gentlemen, love God? Do you often turn to Him, do you always think of Him, do you always pray to Him and fulfill His holy commandments?” It had to be acknowledged that they did not!

“For our good, for our happiness,” concluded the Elder, “at least let us make a promise to ourselves, that from this day, from this hour, from this minute we shall strive to love God above all, and fulfill His holy will!”

Behold what an intelligent, superb conversation Father Herman conducted in society. Without doubt this conversation must have imprinted itself on the hearts of his listeners for their whole life!

SUNDAY SCHOOL

The 2020-21 Sunday School year curriculum focuses on the 12 Great Feasts of the church. Classes rotate through an activity each week, and everything is done remotely. The schedule for December is listed below. Parents whose children are registered will receive additional information for the upcoming week from the church office by Thursday each week.

To register your child(ren) and to ensure we have updated contact information for parents, please fill out this brief form:

<https://forms.gle/HmNKu2Fa2TpPm6Jz6>

December Feast: Nativity of Our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ (12/25)

December 6

- Elementary school: Ask Abouna
- Middle school: At home resources
- High school: Class (via Zoom)

December 13

- Elementary school: At Home Resources
- Middle school: Class (via Zoom)
- High school: Ask Abouna

December 20

- Elementary school: Class (via Zoom)
- Middle school: Ask Abouna
- High school: At home resources

December 27

No Sunday School

Saint Peter the Aleut was a young Aleut Orthodox Christian working for the Russian-American Company. He was one of a party of fourteen fur-hunters sailing near San Francisco whose boat was commandeered in 1815 by the Spanish authorities in the area. Imprisoned by the governor, and threatened with death by the Roman Catholic priest at the mission there if they did not accept Catholicism, all the Aleuts remained true to their Orthodox Faith. According to the eyewitness account of one of these Aleuts, Peter was then cruelly tortured until he died from loss of blood. (The others then were released.) Canonized in 1980 by the Orthodox Church in America, Saint Peter is the first Orthodox martyr of the lower 48 states.



In 1977, Father John Veniaminov (1797–1879) was glorified as a saint by the Church of Russia as “Saint Innocent of Moscow, Enlightener of the Aleuts and Apostle to America.” As a young priest, he traveled from Irkutsk in central Siberia with his pregnant wife, his son, his mother-in-law, and his brother to begin mission work on the island of Unalaska in the Aleutian chain in 1824. During his pastoral ministry there, after first creating an alphabet for the Aleut language out of Slavonic characters, he translated a number of Scriptural and liturgical texts into the Aleut language. He also wrote a lengthy catechetical book in the Aleut language and in Russian, called *The Indication of the Way to the Kingdom of Heaven*.

Saint Innocent was a very fine administrator, carpenter, clock and organ maker, and naturalist, besides being a superb teacher, linguist, and pastor. In 1840, one year after his wife Catherine died, he became the first Bishop of Kamchatka and the Aleutian Islands, with his headquarters in Sitka, Alaska, where he built Saint Michael’s Cathedral and a seminary. As bishop he made pastoral journeys of many months and thousands of miles by kayak and dogsled to visit the widely scattered communities of his far-flung diocese. In 1867 he was elected Metropolitan of Moscow. As metropolitan, he continued his interest in mission work by establishing the Russian Missionary Society to raise funds for the support of missions.

At the time of the sale of Alaska to the United States in 1867, Saint Innocent recommended that all the clergy who did not know the English language be sent home and replaced by those knowing English, and he urged that English be the standard language of the Orthodox Church in America. He urged that seminaries be established for training American-born men to become priests, and he recommended that the headquarters of the Church in America be moved from Sitka to San Francisco. All of this reveals his vision for the growth of Orthodoxy in North America as an indigenous, English-speaking Church.



Saint Jacob Netsvetov (1802–1864) was another outstanding missionary-priest in Russian America. Born to a Russian father and an Aleut mother, he became the first native American to be ordained as an Orthodox priest, upon his completion of seminary training in Irkutsk. Sent back to the island of Atka, his birthplace, in the western Aleutian Archipelago, for 17 years he faithfully ministered there and all across his far-flung “parish” stretching for 2000 miles all the way to the Kurile Islands of northern Japan.

In 1844/1845, when Bishop Innocent opened the Mission to the lower Yukon Delta and Kuskokwim River Basin of the Alaskan mainland, he entrusted it to Saint Jacob, who labored for 18 years among the Eskimo and Athabascan peoples. Like his mentor Saint Innocent, Saint Jacob was an excellent linguist, translator, and naturalist. A major highlight of his ministry, as recorded in his fascinating journal, was his success in 1852 among the Athabascan Indians along the Innoko River, when he baptized hundreds and narrowly averted a tribal war. In “retirement” he ministered to the Tlingit Indians in the area around Sitka, where he died.

Guidelines for the Nativity Fast

November 15 - December 24

The Nativity Fast is one of the four Canonical Fasting Seasons in the Church year. This is a *joyous* fast in anticipation of the Nativity of Christ. That is the reason it is less strict than other fasting periods. The fast is divided into two periods. The 1st period is November 15th through December 19th when the traditional fasting discipline (no meat, dairy, fish, wine, and oil) is observed. There is dispensation given for wine and oil on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Similarly, fish, wine, and oil are permitted on Saturdays and Sundays. The 2nd period is December 20th through 24th when the traditional fasting discipline (no meat, dairy, fish, wine, and oil) is observed. There is dispensation given for wine and oil only on Saturday and Sunday during this period. Here are the guidelines:

| Meat | Dairy | Fish | Wine | Oil |
|---|---|---|--|--|
| beef, chicken, pork, turkey, elk, veal, lamb, deer, rabbit, buffalo, and so forth | milk, eggs, cheese, butter, yogurt, cream, and so forth | fish with a backbone (not including shrimp, octopus, shellfish, squid, or other seafood. | (some include all types of alcohol in this category) | (some include all types of oil in this category) |
| Abstain. | Abstain. | Permitted only on Saturdays and Sundays before December 20. (some permit fish Tuesdays and Thursdays also) | Permitted only on Tuesdays, Thursdays, Saturdays, & Sundays before December 20. | Permitted only on Tuesdays, Thursdays, Saturdays, & Sundays before December 20. |

Abstinence includes refraining from the food and drink mentioned above, as well as from smoking. The Eucharistic Fast means abstaining from at least the previous midnight for communing at a morning Liturgy.

The Purpose of Fasting

The purpose of fasting is to focus on the things that are above, the Kingdom of God. It is a means of putting on virtue in reality, here and now. Through it we are freed from dependence on worldly things. We fast faithfully and in secret, not judging others, and not holding ourselves up as an example.

- Fasting in itself is not a means of pleasing God. Fasting is not a punishment for our sins. Nor is fasting a means of suffering and pain to be undertaken as some kind of atonement. Christ already redeemed us on His Cross. Salvation is a gift from God that is not bought by our hunger or thirst.
- We fast to be delivered from carnal passions so that God's gift of Salvation may bear fruit in us.
- We fast and turn our eyes toward God in His Holy Church. Fasting and prayer go together.

- Fasting is not irrelevant. Fasting is not obsolete, and it is not something for someone else. Fasting is from God, for us, right here and right now.
- Most of all, we should not devour each other. We ask God to "set a watch and keep the door of our lips."

Do Not Fast

- between December 25 and January 5 (even on Wednesdays and Fridays);
- if you are pregnant or nursing a newborn;
- during serious illness;
- without prayer;
- without alms-giving;
- according to your own will without guidance from your spiritual father.