



# CHRIST THE SAVIOR ORTHODOX CHURCH

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## BULLETIN OF MARCH 11, 2012

### SUNDAY, MARCH 11<sup>TH</sup>

#### St. Gregory Palamas

8:40a.m. Hours  
 9:00a.m. Divine Liturgy  
 Coffee Hour

### WEDNESDAY, MARCH 14<sup>TH</sup>

7:00p.m. Pre-Sanctified Liturgy  
 Potluck Lenten Meal

### SATURDAY, MARCH 17<sup>TH</sup>

5:15p.m. Memorial Service  
 6:00p.m. Great Vespers

### SUNDAY, MARCH 18<sup>TH</sup>

#### Sunday of the Holy Cross

8:40a.m. Hours  
 9:00a.m. Divine Liturgy  
 Coffee Hour

*Every man worthy of it participates differently in the great gift of the Spirit; this corresponds to the degree of his own purity, mingling with the harmony of that Beauty.*

*St. Gregory Palamas*

#### READER SCHEDULE

**Sunday, Mar. 18<sup>th</sup>**

Kathy Parrish

**Sunday, Mar. 25<sup>th</sup>**

Gabriela Jones



#### Welcome Visitors

We warmly welcome all those who are visiting us today. It is good to have you all with us!

#### A Special Collection

will be taken today for the family of Fr. Adam Sexton, a priest in Nanticoke, PA, whose rectory burned down last Sunday. Fr. Adam is a father to eight children, and not all of them are the biological offspring of his marriage—some of them were simply others' children who had a need, and he opened up his family to them and made them his own. More information can be found on page 2 of this bulletin. Please generously support Fr. Adam and his family in this time of need.



#### The Pre-Sanctified Liturgy

Great Lent is a season of repentance, fasting, and intensified prayer, and so the Church regards more frequent reception of communion as especially desirable at that time. However, since the full Divine Liturgy has a joyful character not in keeping with the somberness of the Great Fast, the Presanctified Liturgy is therefore celebrated instead. The faithful who wish to receive Holy Communion but are unable to keep a total fast because of medical reasons, weakness, or work responsibilities, normally eat a light lenten meal in the early morning, or by 12 noon at the latest. Should you have any questions or concerns, please speak with Fr. John.

#### Meals Following Presanctified Liturgy

Instead of a sign-up sheet for meals after the Presanctified Liturgies we will have potlucks. Those who wish to bring food are asked to please prepare a light lenten (no meat, dairy, or fish) dish or dessert.



#### Photo Updates to Our Website:

- The 2012 parish council installation – Feb. 25<sup>th</sup>
- The completion of the parking lot – Feb. 28<sup>th</sup>
- The framing of the altar and sacristies – Mar. 5<sup>th</sup>
- The installation of crosses to the roof – Mar. 8<sup>th</sup>

#### Looking Ahead

The next two Sundays are important commemorations: the Sunday of the Cross (3/18) and the Annunciation (3/25). Don't miss them.

**Prayer List:** Fr. Michael Mihalick, Fr. Alexander Atty, Fr. Christian, Mat. Dunia, Kelly Elizabeth & Ana Lucia, Bill Parrish, Hayley, Tyler Pelesh, Jerrie Rife, Wallace & Michelle, Ryan & Kayla, Maleah Morsey, Victoria Kokkinos, Ed Tucker, Karen Nichols, Denise Royal, Simeon, Scott & Maryann, Garrett Cuppels, Jane Koshutko, Nicholas & Linda, Nina Gordon, Mirela & Chris, Troy Duker, Mary Miranda, Bruce, Stella, Lilly Barnett, Amy F., Nedelina, Henrietta Stack, Archimandrite Pachomy.

OPERATING THRU 2/29/12			MARCH OPERATING			RENOVATION TO PARISH CENTER		
Income	Expense	Net	Income	Expense	Difference	Income + Loan	Goal	Expense
9,253	9,931	-678	442	4,858	-4,416	40,691 + 30K	80,000	52,588

## AFTER RECTORY FIRE, PASTOR'S FAITH UNSHAKEN

By Bob Kalinowski (Staff Writer), Published: March 6, 2012 / citizensvoice.com

Nanticoke, PA - As Rev. Adam Sexton consecrated the communion bread Sunday at church, his eldest son rushed to the altar to tell him their home next door was engulfed in flames. Without hesitation, Sexton knew what to do: continue the service.

"It doesn't matter what happens. I have to center my attention on consecrating the gifts," the Rev. Sexton explained Monday.

After accounting for his eight children and making sure his wife had called 911, Sexton finished the final 20 minutes of the liturgy at St. John the Baptist Orthodox Church before checking on the magnitude of the fire. Unconcerned about his possessions, Sexton said he updated the 50 people in attendance and asked them to pray for the safety of his fellow firefighters.

"I told them, 'If you aren't aware of it already, the ruckus outside is the rectory burning down.' I said, 'Have no fear, we are safe. Pray for my dear friends, the firefighters who are putting themselves in grievous danger because they love me,'" said the Rev. Sexton, the chaplain and a volunteer firefighter for the Nanticoke Fire Department.

The Rev. Sexton, 34, his wife, Angie, 34, and their eight children - Alyscia, 12; Jacob, 11; Raeman, 10; Josiah, 8; Ilia, 6; Bede, 4; Gabriel, 3; and Seamus, 1 - lost just about everything in the blaze that consumed the 100-year-old church rectory at 106 Welles St. in the city's Hanover section.

"We lost everything material, but I haven't lost a thing. My children, my wife and firefighters are safe," the Rev. Sexton said. "Yesterday was a very beautiful day."

The family of 10 is temporarily staying at the Host Inn in Wilkes-Barre. Nanticoke's fire department is now organizing efforts to raise money, clothes and other belongings for the family. Monetary donations may be sent to the Father Adam Sexton Fire Fund, c/o Vantage Trust Federal Credit Union, 158 S. Market St., Nanticoke, PA 18634. Clothing, toys and other household items may be dropped

off at Nanticoke Fire Headquarters, 2 E. Ridge St., Nanticoke, PA 18634.

"Obviously, any loss is terrible, but when the person is one of our own, it's even greater. We want to do what we can to help his family get back on their feet," said Nanticoke firefighter Greg Grzymiski, president of the city fire union. Grzymiski said it was not surprising the Rev. Sexton asked his parishioners to pray for firefighters, rather than

him. "That's exactly how he is. He worries about us all the time. He always says he's praying for us. We appreciate it," Greg said.

The exact cause of the fire was undetermined, though investigators said it wasn't suspicious. The Rev. Sexton said he was told authorities believed it was an electrical fire near the hot water heater in the basement.

The Rev. Sexton has led St. John the Baptist for about 3½ years. It was his first assignment after finishing St. Tikhon's Orthodox Theological Seminary in South Canaan Township, Wayne County, in 2005. Previously, the Rev. Sexton lived in Virginia and worked in customer service.



*"Go tell your mother. We're celebrating the liturgy right now." That's what Fr. Adam Sexton said to his son this Sunday morning after he came into the holy place while his father stood at the altar and told him that the family home was on fire.*

After being assigned to the Nanticoke church, the Rev. Sexton became chaplain of the fire department. Then, he decided to become a volunteer firefighter, recently completing the dozens of hours of essentials training.

To make some extra money, the Rev. Sexton also recently began working at Larry's Pizza, a pizza shop owned by friend and fire Capt. Larry Karnes and often referred to as the "Church Street Station." The Rev. Sexton said his official titles are dishwasher and grillmaster, but it would be more appropriate to call him "chief cook and bottle washer" because he does a little of everything.

"I think to be a good chaplain, you have to become a brother. I wanted to walk a mile in their shoes," the Rev. Sexton said. "I don't think in my life I have felt more love from friends and brothers like I do from the Nanticoke Fire Department."

## ASK FATHER: 3 QUESTIONS / 3 ANSWERS

**Question: Why does Christ say that blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is unforgivable? The commentary I've read from the Fathers says that God can forgive this sin too. Is this a contradiction?**

**Answer:** Although this looks like a contradiction, it is actually just two different perspectives, complementary ones in fact; like two sides of the same coin.

All sins, including blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, can be forgiven by God in that He loves everyone unconditionally, truly and eternally. It is His very nature to love and forgive, and this will never change, no matter what we do – the Cross being the supreme sign of this. Even though we rejected Him, putting Him to death on the Cross, He still overcame all of this hatred by His divine love. This is why when speaking about God's side of the equation; the Fathers say that even this sin is forgivable. Yet, on the human side, forgiveness (God's love) can only be received by a willing and repentant heart. This is why blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, from a human perspective, can never be forgiven because this sin is the conscious rejection of God and His love and forgiveness.

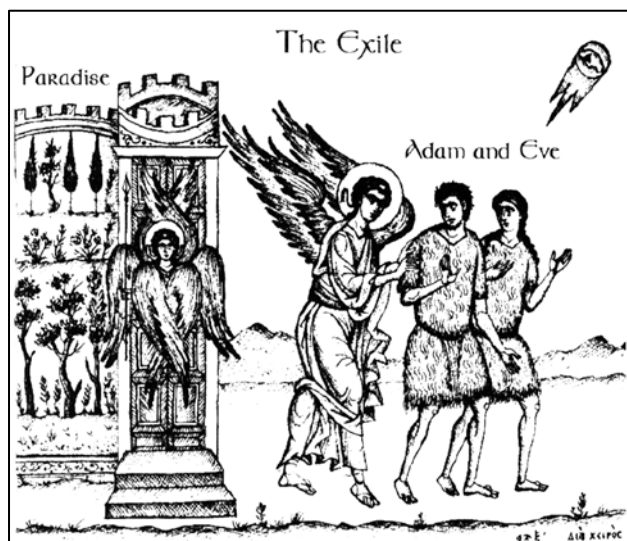
Without this seeming contradiction, we would be forced to deny either 1) the supreme love of God by saying that God will not forgive us if we do or say such a thing, or 2) man's free will, his God-given ability to accept or reject love, which is the determining factor in our relationship with God. In fact, it is these two things, God's love and man's free will, which make for Heaven or Hell. God offers His love to all of mankind. Those who receive and return this love, experience His presence as Paradise and Heaven. Those who reject this love, experience His presence as Hades and Hell.

**Question: What is the difference between Paradise and Hades, and between Heaven and Hell? Are there any people in Heaven or Hell now? What about Elijah the Prophet?**

**Answer:** While sometimes these terms are used interchangeable, when a distinction is made the terms are used as follows:

Hades and Paradise are the terms often used to describe the condition of the soul when it is separated from the body through biological death. Hades describes a negative condition, where the soul is tormented by its sinful relationship with God and its neighbor, and thus fearfully awaits the general resurrection and final Judgment. Paradise describes a positive condition, where the soul is comforted by its healthy relationship with God and its neighbor, and thus peacefully anticipates the bodily resurrection and final Judgment.

Heaven and Hell are the words usually used to describe man's condition after the bodily resurrection.



The joys of Heaven and the torments of Hell exceed those of Paradise and Hades because in this final state, the body too experiences God's presence, and like the soul has either a positive or negative reaction to Him.

Paradise and Hades are experienced only by the soul, and therefore are considered incomplete and temporal realities in comparison to Heaven and Hell which are experience by the soul and body for all eternity.

Christ reigns in Heaven, accompanied by His Mother, who He granted bodily resurrection to after her physical death. All others await the general resurrection. Elijah was carried up "as if into heaven". Although it is unclear exactly what this means, it is the understanding of the Church that this expression describes something other than bodily entering into Heaven.



## Question: How did Christ through the Cross and Resurrection effect Hades and Paradise?

**Answer:** Before Christ's Descent into Hades, when people died, they all went to Hades – the region of the dead. To the degree that they sinned, they suffered torment. To the degree that they were righteous, they received comfort. It was much like how the conscience can inflict torment or offer consolation to us in this life. Although the righteous still went to Hades, since they too had fallen short of the glory of God (Rom. 3:23), they did receive comfort through their God-pleasing lives and their hope for deliverance through Christ. Because of this they were said to dwell in Abraham's bosom, which is referenced by our Lord Himself in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus. The Father's see in the great chasm between the rich man and Lazarus not so much a description of physical geography but rather one of spiritual disposition (ie. distance or closeness to God and one's neighbor).

When Christ descended into Hades, He offered relief from spiritual torment and complete forgiveness of sins to everyone, sinners and righteous alike, just like He had done on earth. Those who accepted the invitation entered into Paradise – the state of joyful and peaceful communion with God.

It is important to note that Paradise had been opened to man through Christ's work; not because He changed God the Father, as some incorrectly believe, but rather because He changed us, drawing all men to Himself by being lifted up on the Cross, changing the world by the revelation of His divine love, the glory which He shared with the Father before the world was. This love, glory, life, light, power, wisdom, etc., had been revealed to mankind at the fullness of time – the time when mankind was sufficiently prepared to repent and return to the Father.

In Christ and through the Holy Spirit, man is able to deny himself, take up his cross, and follow the Lord, dying to the old ways of selfishness and living in self-sacrificial love, returning to the Father, the Source of Life. In and through God, he is able to truly love, fulfilling the new commandment given by Christ, to love one another as He Himself loves us – that is to love self-sacrificially even to the point of death. "No greater love can a man have than this to lay down His life..." (John 15:13). Through the work of Christ, "we have come to know and have believed the love which God has for us. God is love, and the one who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him." (1 John 4:16)

Formerly, Hades had held men captive because through sin they had lost communion with God and were bereft of His life-giving power, His self-sacrificial divine love. In this state, they could not fully repent of their sin, like suffering patients unable to heal themselves because they lacked not only the means for healing but even the full and perfect desire for it.

Now, through Christ, the means for the healing of soul and body are available, and man is gifted, through the unutterable groans of the Holy Spirit to truly desire full repentance and salvation.

Hades now exists as a reality only for those who, through blasphemy of the Holy Spirit, reject the selfless love of God. The gates have been broken and everyone is free to leave the torment of selfishness, unless of course they or we want to remain in it. God forbid!

