



One Returns to Give Thanks

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 7TH

25TH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

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

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 10TH

7:00p.m. Compline
Confessions

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 13TH

ST. HERMAN OF ALASKA

9:00a.m. Akathist
6:00p.m. Great Vespers

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 14TH

SUNDAY OF HOLY FOREFATHERS

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

The Church is not here to fulfill our "spiritual needs," but to change the very nature of those "needs."

Fr. Alexander Schmemmann

READER SCHEDULE

Sunday, Dec. 14th

Kathy Parrish

Sunday, Dec. 21st

Troy Duker



CHRIST THE SAVIOR ORTHODOX CHURCH

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BULLETIN OF DECEMBER 7, 2008

Please Remember in Prayer

Jane Koshutko (recovering with family in Baltimore, MD) Bill Parrish, Robert Evanusa, Olga Leisure, Valentina, Nina Gordon, Fr. Christian, Carol Boris, Constantina & Christos, Alicia & Susannah. If you have a prayer request, please let Fr. John know.

Scrip – Last Call!

Last call for placing Scrip orders before Christmas. If you would like to place an order, please see Jen Alexion or Kathy Parrish.

Choir Practice Today

Sunday, December 7th, following the Coffee Hour.

Christmas Decorations

If you would like to make a donation for Christmas decorations, please see Susan Pappas, our treasurer, or earmark your check accordingly. Thank you!



The Final Draft Copy of the 2009 Directory

is in the back of the church for review. Please take a quick glance to make sure that your information is correct. If not, please let Fr. John know as soon as possible. The Directory will be printed and distributed for Sunday, December 28th.



Parish Email List

Our parish now has an email list for important mid-week announcements and news, as well as occasional items of interest. If you have submitted your email for our Directory of Parishioners and Friends, then you will automatically be added to our email list. New people can be added to our list directly through our website. Emails sent to this list will come only from Fr. John.

A Reading Group

is now being offered at our parish. This group will meet once a month to discuss a book on the spiritual life. The readings will be short, only a chapter or two at most, and will be made available in advance as photocopies in the back of the church. This group will be added to our educational opportunities currently offered on Monday nights: Orthodox Movie Night, Bible Study, and Orthodoxy 101. All are invited!



Annual Meeting

The 2009 Annual Meeting of the Parish will be on, Sunday, January 18th, following the Coffee Hour. The main task of the Annual Meeting is to pass the 2009 Budget and to elect the new Parish Council. All full-time and part-time members, as well as visitors and contributors to the Mission are encouraged to attend. If you have any questions regarding the meeting or are interested in serving on the Council, please speak with Fr. John.





SAINT HERMAN OF ALASKA

Commemorated December 13th and August 9th



St. Herman of Alaska (born 1756 or 1760 in Serpukhov, Russia – died November 15, 1837 on Spruce Island, Alaska) was one of the first Orthodox missionaries to the new world, and is considered by Orthodox to be the patron saint of the Americas.

St. Herman was born in the town of Serpukhov in the Moscow Diocese around 1756. Herman is his name in monasticism; his birth name is unknown. At 16, he entered the monastic life at the Trinity-St. Sergius Hermitage near St. Petersburg.

There, while still a novice, he developed a severe throat infection or abscess. After fervent prayer before an icon of the Theotokos, he collapsed into a deep sleep. During this sleep, he saw a vision in which he was greeted by the Virgin Mary and healed. Upon waking the next day, there was no trace of the past infirmity. Approximately five years later he transferred from Trinity - St. Sergius Hermitage to Valaam Monastery. Eventually he was tonsured a monk, though he was never ordained to the priesthood.

While at Valaam, he was under the spiritual guidance of Abbot Nazarius who had played a significant role in the revitalization of spiritual life in Russia. During this time, the head of the Golikov-Shelikov Company, Gregory Shelikov, visited Valaam and made a request for several monks to begin a mission into the Alaskan territory. Father Herman was selected, along with seven other monks.

Father Herman and the other monks arrived on Kodiak Island on September 24, 1794, aboard a ship named The Three Hierarchs. The monks educated and converted the native Aleuts, and as time progressed they found themselves protecting the natives from exploitation and abuse. Because of this moral stance the monks themselves were abused, arrested and physically threatened. In time, enduring hardship, inclement weather, illness and more, Father Herman stood as the only remainder from the original band of missionaries, the others either being martyred for their faith, dying of natural causes or returning to Russia.

Father Herman felt it his duty to protect the Aleuts from exploitation. He defended them against the often cruel treatment of those who controlled the colony. His concern for their needs have been documented, expressed in letters sent to the for-

mer administrator of the colony, Simeon Ivanovich Yanovsky. Father Herman also would intercede before the governors on behalf of the oppressed. He helped the needy in whatever way he could.

Between the years of 1808 and 1818, Father Herman lived on Spruce Island. Spruce Island is almost completely covered by forest and is separated by a strait about a mile and a quarter wide from Kodiak Island. Selecting this island for the location of his hermitage he called the land there "New Valaam" after the monastery from which he had left to come to America. He dug a cave in the ground and lived out his first full summer there. It was in this cave that he was later buried. To endure the harsh winters he constructed a cell in which he lived for more than forty years.

A small chapel was built as well, along with a school and guest house. The local people would visit him often. Food was produced from an experimental garden he planted for himself and the orphans of the land. He devoted his life to prayer and to performing those services he could do as a simple monk who had not been ordained to the priesthood.

His love for the people of Alaska was sincere and he found happiness in being around the children. An

epidemic plagued Alaskans when an American ship made land at Kodiak. Fr. Herman remained with the ill and dying, offering them constant comfort and ceaseless prayer. It is said that his love was so genuine that he could see into the hearts of his spiritual children and help them.

The natives regarded him as their intercessor before God. When there was a tidal wave on the Island, Fr. Herman took an icon of the Theotokos, placed it on the beach and assured the people that the water would not rise beyond the place where the icon was, and it did not. When there was a great fire on the island, it is said that he dug a trench and stayed the flames. Prior to his death he foretold that there would be no priest to bury him and that he would be forgotten for 30 years. He died on November 15, 1837, but was not buried until December 13 because a priest could not come to serve the funeral, and was forgotten until the first investigation of his life in 1867 by Bishop Peter of Alaska.





FOR CONSIDERATION

From the Prologue By St. Nikolai Velimirovich

A tale of Elder Barlaam to Joasaph: The citizens in a certain town had a custom of choosing as king a stranger who did not know their laws and customs. After they had crowned him king, they clothed him in beautiful robes, fed him abundantly and surrounded him with every luxury. However, as soon as one year had elapsed, they deposed their king, stripped him of all his goods and his clothes, and drove him completely naked to a distant island, where he had neither bread nor roof nor companions, and where he would die in misery and humiliation. The citizens of this town would then choose another king, also a stranger and also for one year; then a third, then a fourth, then a fifth and so forth. But it once happened that they chose a very wise and cautious man. He learned from his servants what had happened to the kings of this town after their year. Therefore, over the course of the whole year he zealously gathered food and goods and daily sent them to that island. When the year had run out and when he was stripped of his clothing and cast onto the island, he found himself amidst an enormous quantity of food, silver, gold and precious stones, and continued to live there even better than he lived as king in that town.

The interpretation is this: The town represents the world; the citizens represent the evil spirits; the kings are men, either foolish or wise. The foolish men think only of the pleasures of this life, as if it were eternal; but in the end, death cuts everything off and they, naked of all good works, go to hell. The wise, however, perform many good works, and send these good works ahead of them to the other world. At their repose, the wise kings - the good men - depart to that world where their accumulated riches await them, and where they reign in greater eternal glory and beauty than they reigned here on earth.



ON LOVE FOR GOD

From the Life of St. Herman



Once St. Herman of Alaska was invited on board a frigate that had come from St. Petersburg. The captain of the frigate was a man quite learned, highly educated; he had been sent to America by Imperial command to inspect all the colonies. With the captain were some 25 officers, likewise educated men. In this company there sat a desert-dwelling monk of small stature, in an old garment, who by his wise conversation brought all his listeners to such a state that they did not know how to answer him. The captain himself related: "We were speechless fools before him!"

Father Herman gave them all one common question: "What do you, gentlemen, love above all, and what would each of you wish for his happiness?" Diverse answers followed. One desired wealth, one glory, one a beautiful wife, one a fine ship which he should command, and so on in this fashion. "Is it not true," said Father Herman at this, "that all your various desires can be reduced to one - that each of you desires that which, in his understanding, he considers best and most worthy of love?" "Yes, it is so," they all replied. "Well, then, tell me," he continued, "can there be anything better, higher above everything, more surpassing everything and in general more worthy of love, than our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, who created us, perfectly adorned us, gave life to all, supports all, nourishes and loves all, who Himself is love and more excellent than all men? Should not a person then love God high above all and desire and seek Him more than all else?" All began to say: "Well, yes! That is understood! That speaks for itself!"

"And do you love God?" the Elder then asked. All replied: "Of course, we love God. How can one not love God?" "And I, sinful one, for more than forty years have been striving to love God, and cannot say that I perfectly love Him," answered Father Herman; then he began to show how a person should love God. "If we love someone," he said, "we always think of him, strive to please him, day and night our heart is occupied with this subject. Is it thus that 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 very moment 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!

THE MIND OF CHRIST

Written by the Very Rev. Vladimir Berzonsky

"Have within yourselves the same disposition of mind as was in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 2:5)

The high expectations that St. Paul has for us are shown in the potential for spiritual development that he insists we must reach. What is he asking from us - that we should have a mind like that of Jesus? Put our thoughts into the thoughts of the Son of God? It takes a saint in the state of grace to propose that the Holy Spirit is at work within us in so great a degree that such a connection would be possible. And yet we recall the passage sung at the circular procession around the font just after each baptism: "As many as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. Alleluia!"

The putting on is made visible by the white garb wrapped around the new Christian, but surely there's more to a life in Christ than a sheet that is soon removed. To be "in Christ" is to have Christ in us - in our minds, our hearts, and within our entire souls and bodies. Here is the mystical awareness of our union with the Father in the Son by the Holy Spirit; but it's a union we must develop - otherwise it atrophies. To be "in Christ" is to be in communication with the Lord through prayer and contemplation. I like that word: con = with, or in; temple = the temple near your brain, that temple which is you. Suddenly an insight: "Destroy the temple [Jerusalem] and in three days I will build it up." You immerse your whole mind and emotions into Christ and His agony on the cross, and on the third day you rise with Him and follow the risen Lord through your whole lifetime. Every thought you make, every step you take is done in consultation with the Lord within you. Ideally you have achieved St. Paul's order. You have the mind of Christ. "Ideally," because existence in what is considered by society the real world is a challenge to the directive of the holy apostle and the model of the saints.

Just consider all the ways that we are separate just from one another in this individualist society. As stated in the contemporary saying: Life is not a Sunday afternoon walk in the park. We have even now evidence of the ways parents are alienated from their children. In the past months mothers on separate occasions have driven several thousand miles from their homes to reach the state of Nebraska, bringing their teenage children with them. In what was intended to alleviate the many in-

stances of abandonment of unwanted offspring, Nebraska passed a law to accept and to find homes for newborn infants. It seemed a sensible way to offset the plethora of abortions in our nation. However, the law failed to put a cap on the age of such infants. Thus, "mothers" of teenagers found a way to be rid of the fruit of their wombs. Here is the brutal reality of family values in the USA of the 21st century.

The French writer, J. P. Sartre, in an infamous quotation defined for himself the concept of hell: "Hell is other people." In contradiction to that sad statement, the apostle Paul is appealing to us to comprehend and to imitate the loving humility of the Son of God who being One of the Holy Trinity "thought it no robbery" to leave the Godhead and

become one of what He had created, coming to earth and living the life of a human being. We must return to this profound mystery time and time again, placing our own values into perspective. We who are forever asking good things from Christ are being asked a favor from Him. He wants us to convert our minds from always begging blessings for ourselves and work at forgetting our own endless needs. Abandon selfish interests and incarnate ourselves at least in our desires into all others



with whom we are sharing a moment of time in a portion of space. Become agents of Christ's love and mercy. Take ownership of the needs and life situations of all those whom He loves as much as He loves you and me.

St. Paul is suggesting that we are so filled up with ourselves and our wants that there is not any space left for anybody else. Pull the plug on the volume of whatever spiritual liquid that is full to the brim with you, and fill up with the priorities of others who are everywhere around but whom you haven't noticed. The effect will be a Christ-like revelation. You will begin to recognize another person that you may come to love and enjoy. For certain it will bring to your awareness a new and loftier meaning for living when your new self emerges. The invisible arrows that had always been coming from outside you and were aimed at your mind and heart will be redirected. They will point from you to a life beyond this lifetime and propel you to the Kingdom of Heaven.