



## HOLY FOREFATHERS OF CHRIST

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

#### Holy Forefathers of Christ

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

### TUESDAY, DECEMBER 13<sup>TH</sup>

#### St. Herman of Alaska

9:00a.m. Molieben

### THURSDAY, DECEMBER 15<sup>TH</sup>

7:00p.m. Compline; Confessions

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

5:00p.m. Bible Study  
6:00p.m. Great Vespers

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

#### Sunday Before Nativity

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

#### READER SCHEDULE

##### Sunday, Dec. 18<sup>th</sup>

Jodi McElwee

##### Sunday, Dec. 25<sup>th</sup>

Kathy Parrish



## CHRIST THE SAVIOR ORTHODOX CHURCH

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### BULLETIN OF DECEMBER 11, 2011

#### Welcome Visitors

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

#### Choir Practice

will be held today, Sunday, Dec. 11<sup>th</sup>. This practice will be offered during the coffee hour. We will go over hymns in preparation for Christmas. All choir members are asked to attend. Those interested in joining the choir are also invited to stay for the practice.



#### Helping a Needy Family

This Sunday and next, you are invited to make a donation to help buy Christmas presents for the family we have adopted this year. If you would like to make a donation, please do so via the special collection basket or by seeing Mike McFarland.

#### Rest of Melvin Nicholas Woodell

On Dec. 12<sup>th</sup> we prayerfully remember Melvin Nicholas Woodell, who departed one year ago. May his memory be eternal!

#### About Confession and Holy Communion

As a reminder, confession can be heard before or after any service or class, or at any other time by appointment. Frequent communicants should make a good confession during the Nativity Fast. Those who do not approach the Chalice regularly should seek to avail themselves of Confession and Holy Communion during the Nativity season. If you made your confession in the presence of another Orthodox priest, please just let Fr. John know so he will not worry.



#### Two New Matching Donations!

\$5,000 will be donated to the "Building Fund" if by 12/15/11, this amount can be raised by Friends of the Mission, not residing locally.

\$5,000 will be donated to the "Building Fund" if by December 15, 2011, this amount can be raised by Local Members of the Mission.

#### Christmas Meal

In the back of the church is a sign-up sheet for the Christmas meal, which will follow the midnight service. Absolutely everyone is invited to stay for the meal, even if you cannot bring a dish!

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

OPERATING THRU 11/30/11			DECEMBER OPERATING			BUILDING FUND MATCHING DONATIONS		
Income	Expense	Net	Income	Expense	Difference	20K (Everyone)	5K (Parish)	5K (Friends)
46,671	58,414	-11,743	843	5,900	-5,056	20,000!	1,106	11,895!

## WAS IT FAIR OF GOD TO HARDEN PHARAOH'S HEART?

From gabrielsmessage.wordpress.com

*"The LORD said unto Moses, When thou goest to return into Egypt, see that thou do all those wonders before Pharaoh, which I have put in thine hand: but I will harden his heart, that he shall not let the people go."* (Exodus 4:21)

*"Peter began to speak: I now realise how true it is that God does not show favouritism but accepts men from every nation who fear him and do what is right."* (Acts 10:34-35)

*"GOD said to Moses: 'I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.'" (Ex. 33, 19).*

The Apostle Paul, citing this Old Testament passage, concludes: *"Therefore He has mercy on whom He wills, and whom He wills, He hardens."* (Rom. 9, 18).

This needs to be interpreted in Orthodox terms.

How does God want to have mercy on one and want to harden another? Is there favouritism in God?

Was it fair of God to harden Pharaoh's heart? Did Pharaoh have no choice in the matter? Bishop Hierotheos Vlachos passes onto us a very helpful solution from the Orthodox tradition.

According to the interpretation of Theophylactus of Bulgaria, this is connected with the nature of man and not with God's action.

St. Theophylactus says: *"Just as the sun softens the wax candle but hardens clay, not arbitrarily but because of the different materials of the wax candle and the clay: so also God is said to harden the clay heart of the Pharaoh"*.

Therefore the grace of God, that is to say His love, which will radiate to all, will work according to a man's spiritual condition.

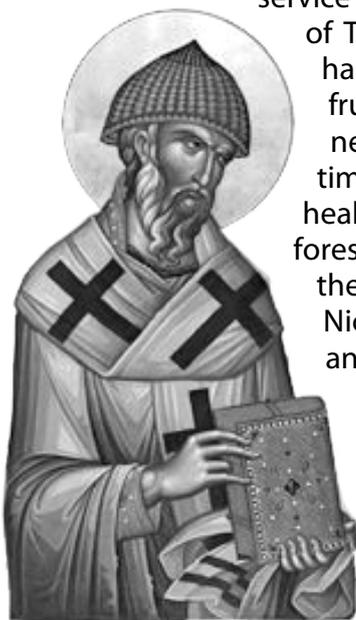


## SAINT SPYRIDON THE WONDERWORKER, BISHOP OF TREMITHUS

Commemorated December 12<sup>th</sup> / From *The Prologue of Ochrid*

The island of Cyprus was both the birthplace and the place where this glorious saint served the Church. Spyridon was born of simple parents, farmers, and he remained simple and humble until his death. He married in his youth and had children, but when his wife died he devoted himself completely to the

service of God. Because of his exceptional piety, he was chosen as bishop of the city of Tremithus. Yet even as a bishop he did not change his simple way of living, handling his livestock and cultivating his land himself. He used very little of the fruits of his labor for himself; instead, he distributed a greater share to the needy. He manifested great miracles by God's power: he brought down rain in time of drought, stopped the flow of a river, raised several people from the dead, healed Emperor Constantius of a grave illness, saw and heard angels of God, foresaw future events, discerned the secrets of men's hearts, converted many to the true Faith, and did much else. He took part in the First Ecumenical Council in Nicaea [325], and he brought many heretics back to Orthodoxy by his simple and clear expositions of the Faith as well as by his mighty miracles. He was so simply dressed that once, when he wanted to enter the imperial court at the invitation of the emperor, a soldier, thinking that he was a beggar, struck him on the face. Meek and guileless, Spyridon turned the other cheek to him. He glorified God through many miracles, and was of benefit, not only to many individuals but also to the whole Church of God. He entered into rest in the Lord in the year 348. His miracle-working relics rest on the island of Corfu, and even today they glorify God with many miracles.



## **NATIVITY RESOURCES, ACTIVITIES AVAILABLE ON DEPARTMENT OF CHRISTIAN EDUCATION WEB SITE**

*From OCA.org*

A variety of educational resources for the Great Feast of the Nativity of Our Lord are available on the web site of the Orthodox Church in America's Department of Christian Education at [dce.oca.org](http://dce.oca.org).

A five-session study unit, "The Nativity Season," is available for use with five different age groups. It may be accessed at [dce.oca.org/focus/nativity](http://dce.oca.org/focus/nativity). The unit's objectives are to enable the students to describe some of the elements of the Nativity season, including hymns, saints, fasting, and Old Testament preparation, and to define the Great Feast of the Nativity as God's long-awaited gift to us of a Savior.

Of special interest is the making of a "Jesse Tree" in lesson 4 for age levels 10-12 and 13-17. Both contain Jesse Tree materials, which will offer students a good foundation for understanding how the Church views Old Testament prophecies and figures as leading to the Nativity of Jesus Christ.



## **CHRISTMAS TREE TRADITIONS**

*From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia*

Traditionally, Christmas trees were not brought in and decorated until Christmas Eve (24 December), and then removed the day after twelfth night (i.e., 6 January); to have a tree up before or after these dates was even considered bad luck. Modern commercialization of Christmas has resulted in trees being put up much earlier; in shops often as early as late October (in the UK, Selfridge's Christmas department is up by early September, complete with Christmas trees). A common tradition in U.S. homes is to put the tree up right after Thanksgiving (the fourth Thursday in November) and to take it down right after the New Year. Some households in the U.S. do not put up the tree until the second week of December, and leave it up until the 6th of January (Epiphany). In Germany, traditionally the tree is put up 24th of December and taken down 7th of January, though many start one or two weeks earlier. In Australia, the Christmas tree is usually put up on the 1st of December, which occurs about a week before the school summer holidays; except for South Australia, where most people put up their tree after the Adelaide Credit Union Christmas Pageant, which is in early November. Some traditions suggest that Christmas trees may be kept up until no later than the 2nd of February, the feast of the Presentation of Jesus in the Temple (Candlemas), when the Christmas season effectively closes. Superstitions warn of negative consequences if Christmas greenery is not removed by Candlemas Eve.



## **A MEDITATION: YEAR OF THE LORD, VOLUME 2**

During the Christmas season God's love and His message of new hope comes to us through the beauty and peace of the incarnate Christ. Yet the Good News of God's love may be entirely missed, and Christmas may be an unfulfilled dream, amidst the hectic bustle of cleaning, shopping, writing, calling, decorating, banking and visiting. The basic reason for an unfulfilled Christmas is that we focus on ourselves, how to please each other, how to feel good and how to secure happiness with all the things we regard necessary. Yet only Christ can give us a true Christmas. Only His presence in our hearts can bring happiness, peace, joy, warmth and security. Cling to Christ ever more closely during the Christmas season. Take time to pray and to establish your spiritual and practical priorities. Let Christ come with you from home to school, from kitchen to shopping center, from Church to business office.

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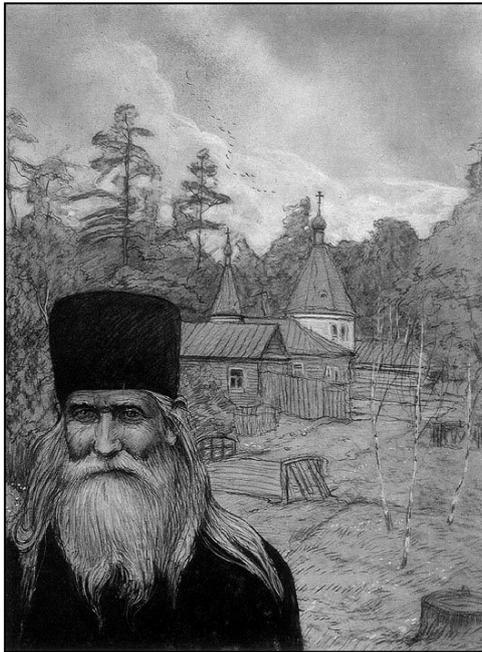
## THY WILL BE DONE

By VRev. Vladimir Berzonsky

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"Teach me to treat all that comes to me with peace of soul, and with the firm conviction that Thy will governs all." (Morning Prayer of the monks of the Optino monastery)

Among the multitude of monasteries in pre-Revolutionary Russia, Optino, in the south central region, was noted for having produced a series of elders [starts in Russian, geronda in Greek] who had gone through decades of silent meditation and prayer, then for several years before their death would open their cells to permit pilgrims to visit and imbibe spiritual wisdom from them. There are none such in the New World as far as I am aware because such elders come only after all conditions for their existence are met. We Americans would not know how to appreciate their presence even if our monasteries were to rise to the means by which such elders, male or female, were to manifest themselves in our times. Those who have read the novel by Dostoevsky, *Brothers Karamazov*, will remember the elder Zossima who had an influence on the young hero Alyosha. The author based Zossima on an elder he had met on a visit to the Optino monastery with another intellectual famous in his own right, Vladimir Soloviev.



The two had set out for Optino as friends with different personal problems that troubled their souls. Dostoevsky had recently come from the funeral of his son and namesake, Fedya, just three years old. Only those who have buried their own children can know the depths of despair such tragedies inflict upon the parents. Why should it be? Where was God when heartfelt prayers were offered up with tears watering the faith of the believing souls? Why do the innocent suffer? Why do the good ones die too soon?

Soloviev was among the most brilliant thinkers Russia ever produced. He was among the most daring in the nation, matched only in recent times by Alexander Solzhenitzyn. And just as misunderstood. Soloviev called upon the emperor to give a

universal example of true Christianity by pardoning rather than executing the assassin of his father, Tsar Alexander II. For that he was expelled from his position as lecturer at the Moscow University. He was obsessed with the vision of a united Christianity in which Orthodox Christians, Roman Catholics and Protestants would come together bringing their separate gifts to a universal Church of fellowship for all humanity. And he was summarily misunderstood, his good intentions misused or dismissed as naïve and impossible by all three major Christian expressions of Jesus Christ's gospel.

What message can an elder provide for such sufferers? He cannot restore life to the novelist's son, nor can he intercede with the emperor on behalf of the philosopher even if he sought to be restored to the university faculty. But he can comfort them and others with the warmth of his own soul. It helps immeasurably to know at such times of profound grief and spiritual confusion that God is not somewhere beyond the clouds, but within the souls of those who make a home in their hearts for the divine presence.

First comes the awareness of the Holy Spirit abiding within those who have overcome the darkness of alienation, which is the residue of sin. Those who have the light of Christ shining in their souls are capable of manifesting holiness and making it available to others. They beam a divine light toward those in the darkness of despair, alienation, and a false feeling of abandonment; and in that light, they share Christ's light.

Then appears the restored cosmic order within the soul of the sufferer. It was always there, only harmful depression disguised it and thwarted expression. God's will was being done despite evidence to the contrary. "God is where He was," the saying goes. And even if we have not the joy of elders yet among us, nevertheless, we can be comforters to one another if we have sufficient faith to act as true Christians and let the light of Christ illumine all, as the Presanctified Liturgy reminds us.

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