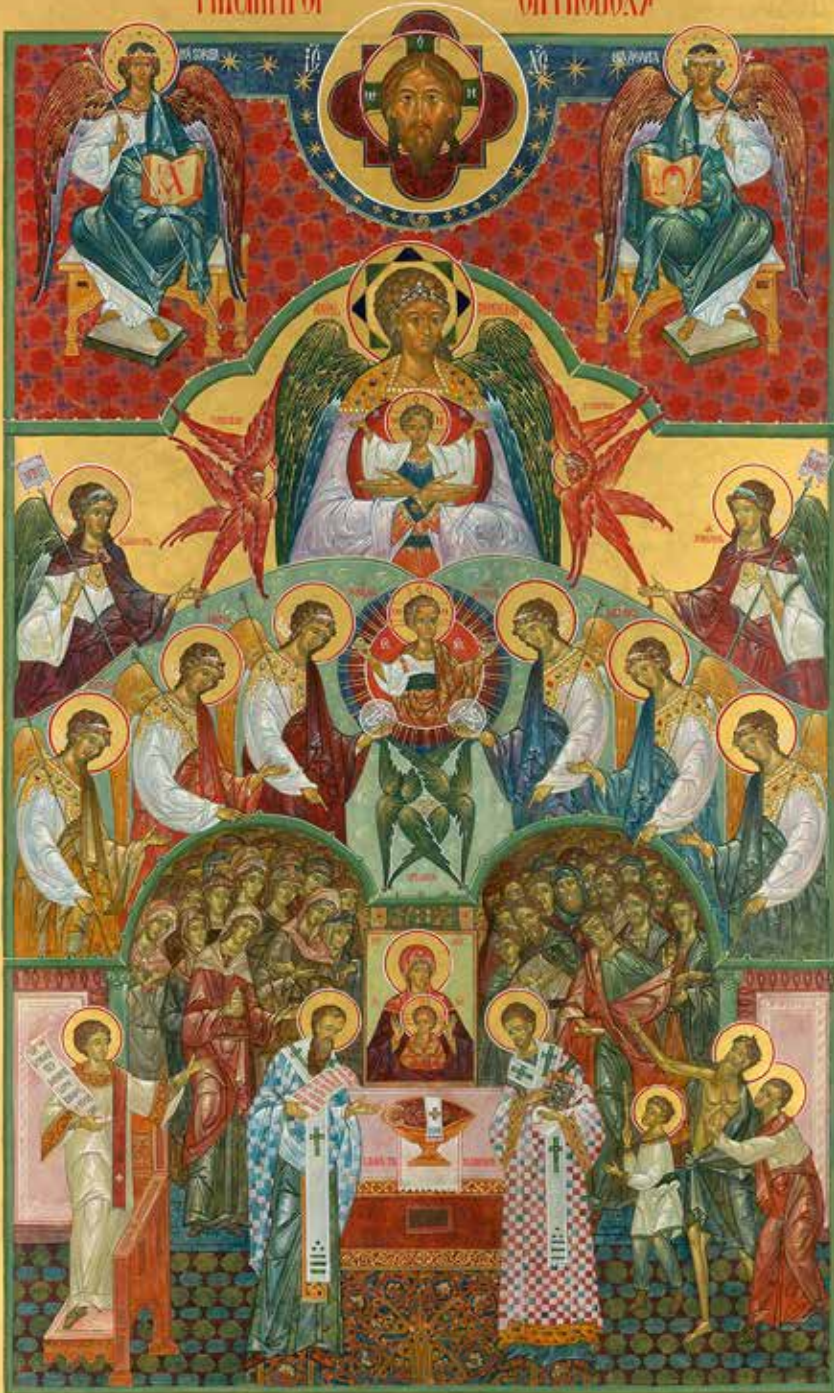


TRICUMPH OF

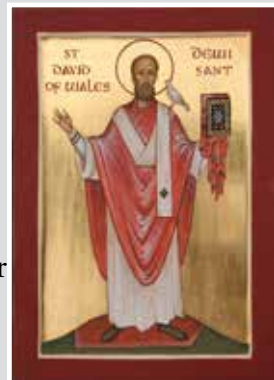
ORTHODOXY



# SAINTS OF THE DAY

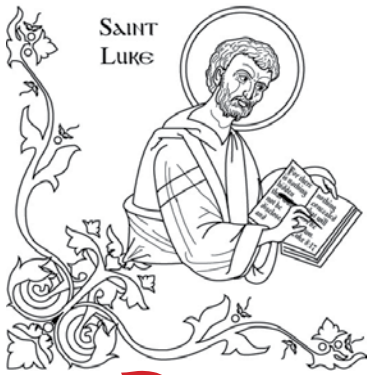
Sun., March 1<sup>st</sup>, 2026 • Sunday of the Triumph of Orthodoxy

Righteous martyr Eudokia of Heliopolis (107); Martyrs Nestorianus, Tribimius, Marcellus, and Anthony, of Perge in Pamphylia, by the sword (249-251); Martyr Antonina of Nicaea in Bithynia (c. 286-305); Virgin-martyr Domnina of Syria (c. 460); Martyrs Antonius, Marcellus, Silvester and Sophronius, in Palestine; Martyrs Agapius, Nicephorus and Charisius; Saint Silvester; Saint Synesius, ascetic of Lysos, Cyprus; 260 Martyrs of Rome (c. 269); Martyrs Hermes, Adrian and Companions, in Numidia in North Africa under Maximian Herculeus (c. 290); Martyr Luperculus (3rd century); Martyrs Leo, Donatus, Abundantius, Nicephorus, and nine others—a group of thirteen martyrs who laid down their lives for Christ in North Africa; Saint Felix III, Pope of Rome from 483-492 (492); Saint Herculanus, Bishop of Perugia in Italy, beheaded by soldiers of the Ostrogoths (549); Saint Albinus of Angers (c. 550); **Saint David of Wales, patron saint of Wales** (c. 589); Saint Marnock (c. 625); Saint Suitbert, “Apostle of the Frisians”, monastic founder in the Netherlands (713); Saint Siviard, Saint-Calais on the River Anisole in France, who succeeded his father as abbot of the monastery (729); Saint Monan (874); Venerable Luke of Sicily, Abbot of the Monastery of Mount Mula in Calabria and Wonderworker (c. 915); Martyrs Gervasius and Leo, “Apostle of the Basques” and Bishop of Bayonne, brothers (c. 900); Saint Rudesind, a Galician bishop and abbot (977); Venerable Agapius of the Vatopedi Monastery on Mount Athos (13th century); Venerable Martyrius, Abbot of Zelenetsk in Pskov (1603); New martyr Parascevas of Trebizond (1659); New hieromartyr Methodius, of Russia (1920); New martyr Antonina of Kizliar, Abbess (1924); New martyr Anastasia Andreyevna, Fool-for-Christ, in the North Caucasus; Venerable Mother Zosima of Ennatsky (1935); New Hieromartyr Olga (1937); New Hieromartyr Peter Lyubimov, Archpriest, of Kishkino, Moscow (1938); New Hieromartyrs (1938): Basil Nikitsky, John Streltsov, Benjamin Famintsev, and Michael Bukrinsky, priests; New Hieromartyr Anthony Korzh, Hierodeacon of Kiziltash Monastery, Crimea; Virgin-martyrs Anna, Daria Zaitseva, Eudokia Arkhipov, Alexandra Dyachkova; Martyr Basil Arkhipov; Virgin-martyr Hope (Nadezhda) Abakumova; New Hieromartyr Alexander Ilyenkov of Berdyansk (Simferopol-Crimea), priest (1942); New Hieromartyr Basil Konstantinov-Grishin, priest (1943).



A detailed description of the cover icon can be found on our website,

[www.stlukeanniston.org](http://www.stlukeanniston.org)



# ST. LUKE ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN CHURCH

Diocese of the South, Orthodox Church in America

1415 Woodstock Ave., Anniston, AL 36207

The Very Rev. Archbishop Father Basil Henry

(256) 235-3893 • [basilncana@yahoo.com](mailto:basilncana@yahoo.com)

<https://stlukeanniston.org>

## NEWS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

- **We welcome our visitors.** Please join us for a potluck meal after Liturgy so you can get to know us. Communion is for Orthodox Christians who have fasted before Liturgy but everyone is welcome to the blessed bread an Altar Server will offer.
- Grant, O Lord, a prosperous and peaceful life, health, salvation, and furtherance in all good things to all Thy servants who are celebrating birthdays, namesdays and anniversaries, and preserve them for **MANY YEARS!**
- Today the **Liturgy of St. Basil** begins to be celebrated and will be every Sunday until Palm Sunday. You'll find the service book in the rack by the front door.
- After Liturgy today we will have an outside procession for the **Triumph of Orthodoxy** we are celebrating today. We will all carry icons in celebration of their restoration. Icons are available if you need.
- Our **Annual Parish meeting** will be March 15th after liturgy.
- If you wish to receive **Communion** on Wednesday, please begin to fast after lunch.

### This Week's Fasting, Services and Scripture Readings

Mon., 3/2	Tues.,3/3	Wed., 3/4	Thurs.,3/5	Fri., 3/6	Sat.,3/7	Sun.,3/8
<b>Great Lent</b>						
						Divine Liturgy, 10 a.m.
		Presanctified, 4:00 p.m.			Great Vespers, 4:00 p.m.	Brunch & Fellowship
Gen. 3:21-4:7	Gen. 4:8-15	Gen. 4:16-26	Gen. 5:1-24	Gen. 5:32-6:8	Heb. 3:12-16	Heb. 1:10-2:3
Prov. 3:34-4:22	Prov. 5:1-15	Prov. 5:15-6:3	Prov. 6:3-20	Prov. 6:20-7:1	Mark 1:35-44	Mark 2:1-12
Isaiah 4:2-5:7	Isaiah 5:7-16	Isaiah 5:16-25	Isaiah 6:1-12	Isaiah 7:1-15		

Service times are subject to change. Any questions, text Subdeacon Nicholas @ (256) 343-1141 or [nmbailey@me.com](mailto:nmbailey@me.com).

You can also visit [stlukeanniston.org](https://stlukeanniston.org) for the latest schedule.

# Divine Liturgy

of St. Basil the Great

## Troparia/Kontakia

REFER TO PAGE 6 IN THE LITURGY BOOK.

### Troparion of the Resurrection (Tone 5)

Let us, the faithful, praise and worship the Word, \* co-eternal with the Father and the Spirit, \* born for our salvation from the Virgin; \* for He willed to be lifted up on the Cross in the flesh, \* to endure death, \* and to raise the dead \*\* by His glorious Resurrection.

### Troparion for Sunday of Orthodoxy (Tone 2)

We venerate Thy most pure image, O Good One; \* and ask forgiveness of our transgressions, O Christ our God. \* Of Thy good will Thou wast pleased to ascend the Cross in the flesh \* and deliver Thy creatures from bondage to the Enemy. \* Therefore with thankfulness we cry aloud to Thee: \* “Thou hast filled all with joy, O our Savior, \*\* for Thou alone hast come to save the world.

*Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.*

### Kontakion for the Sunday of Orthodoxy (Tone 8)

No one could describe the Word of the Father; \* but when He took flesh from you, O Theotokos, He accepted to be described, \* and restored the fallen image to its former state by uniting it to divine beauty. \*\* We confess and proclaim our salvation in words and images.

## Scripture Readings

REFER TO PAGES 7-9 IN THE LITURGY BOOK.

### Prokeimenon

*(Song of the Fathers)*

#### Tone 4

Blessed art Thou, O Lord God of our Fathers, and praised and glorified is Thy name forever!

*v: For Thou art just in all that Thou hast done for us!*

### The Epistle Reading

Hebrews 11:24-26, 32-12:2

*(from the Lenten Triodion)*

*Brethren*, by faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward.

And what shall I more say? for the time would fail me to tell of Gideon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthah; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets: Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions. Quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. Women received their dead raised to life again: and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance;

that they might obtain a better resurrection: And others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; (Of whom the world was not worthy:) they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth. And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect.

Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith;

## Alleluia

Tone 4

*(for the Sunday of Orthodoxy)*

*v. Moses and Aaron were among His priests; Samuel also was among those who called on His Name.*

*v. They called to the Lord and He answered them.*

## The Gospel Reading

John 1:43-51

*(from the Lenten Triodion)*

*At that time:* Jesus decided to go to Galilee. And he found Philip and said to him, "Follow me." Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. Philip found Nathanael, and he said to him, "We have found him of whom Moses in the law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." Nathanael said to him, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" Philip said to him, "Come and see." Jesus saw Nathanael coming to him, and said of him, "Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile!" Nathanael said to him, "How do you know me?" Jesus answered him, "Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you." Nathanael answered him, "Rabbi, you are the son of God! You are the King of Israel!" Jesus answered him, "Because I said to you, I saw you under the fig tree, do you believe? You shall see greater things than these." And he said to him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, you will see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man."

## Theotokion

*(for the Liturgy of St. Basil)*

REFER TO PAGES 21-22 IN THE LITURGY BOOK.

*All of creation rejoiceth in thee, O Full of Grace:  
the assembly of Angels and the race of men.  
O sanctified temple and spiritual paradise,  
the glory of virgins,  
from whom God was incarnate and became a Child:*

*our God before the ages.  
He made thy body into a throne,  
and thy womb He made more spacious than the heavens.  
All of creation rejoiceth in thee, O Full of Grace.//  
Glory to thee!*



# Sunday of Orthodoxy

## *Can There Any Good Thing Come Out of Nazareth?*

John 1: 43-51

From *The Explanation of the Gospel of St. John*  
by Blessed Theophylact, Archbishop of Ochrid and Bulgaria

**43-45. The day following Jesus would go forth into Galilee, and findeth Philip, and saith unto him, Follow me. Now Philip was of Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. Philip findeth Nathanael, and saith unto him, We have found Him, of Whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.**

Andrew, by listening to the Forerunner, and Peter, by listening to Andrew, both followed Christ. But it appears that Philip, without the prompting of another, obeyed Jesus at once when He said to him, *Follow me*. How was he convinced so instantaneously? It appears, first of all, that the voice of the Lord stung his soul with love. The sound of the Lord's voice was not like that of any other; for those who were worthy, it immediately kindled within them a burning love for Him. As Cleopas and the other disciple on the road to Emmaus said, *Did not our heart burn within us, while He talked with us by the way?* (Lk. 24:32) Furthermore, Philip had pondered earnestly within his heart, and continuously studied the books of Moses, and was always waiting for the coming of the Christ; therefore, as soon as he saw Him, he was convinced. This is why he said, *We have found Him!* which shows that he had always been seeking Him. Perhaps he had learned something about Christ from Andrew and Peter. Because they were of the same city, it is likely that they had talked together and discussed the Lord. The Evangelist seems to imply this when He says, *Now Philip was of the city of Andrew and John*. This was a very small city, more like a village. Therefore, we should marvel at Christ's power, that from such insignificant places He chose His pre-eminent disciples. Philip does not keep this good thing to himself, but shares it with Nathanael. Because Nathanael was a diligent student of the law and knew it thoroughly, Philip refers him to the law and the prophets. Philip calls the Lord *the son of Joseph*, because they thought He was his child. And he names Him *of Nazareth*, although He was, properly speaking, of Bethlehem. He was born in Bethlehem and raised in Nazareth. Because the manner of His birth was hidden from most, while His upbringing was apparent, they called Him *Jesus of Nazareth*.

**46-48. And Nathanael said unto him, Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth? Philip saith unto him, Come and see. Jesus saw Nathanael coming to Him, and saith of him, Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile! Nathanael saith unto Him, Whence knowest Thou me? Jesus answered and said unto him, Before Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee.**

Philip had said that Christ was from Nazareth. But Nathanael, astute in the law, knew from the Scriptures that the Messiah should come from Bethlehem. This is why he said, *Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?* Philip answered, *Come and see*, knowing that once he tasted Christ's words, he would never leave Him. Christ commends Nathanael for being a true Israelite, who said nothing either to curry favor or to cause enmity. Nathanael's words stemmed not from disbelief, but from a discerning mind well-versed in the law, which knew that the Christ would come from Bethlehem and not from Nazareth. How then does Nathanael respond to the Lord? Does he become conceited from these words of praise? Not in the least. Persisting in his desire to establish clearly and certainly the identity of this Man, he asks, *Whence knowest Thou me?* Then the Lord reveals His very divinity by speaking of things which no one could have known except Nathanael and Philip, because they had spoken and acted alone. Although He was not present, Christ

knew all that had taken place when Philip spoke with Nathanael. This is why is He says, *when thou wast under the fig tree*. Before Philip drew near, the Lord spoke these words concerning Nathanael, lest anyone should suspect that Philip had told Him of the fig tree and his conversation with Nathanael. At once Nathanael understood Who the Lord was, and confessed Him to be *the Son of God*. Hear what he says:

**49-51. Nathanael answered and saith unto Him, Rabbi, Thou art the Son of God; Thou art the King of Israel. Jesus answered and said unto him, Because I said unto thee, I saw thee under the fig tree, believest thou? Thou shalt see greater things than these. And He saith unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man.**



Prophecy has great power, even greater than miracles, to move a man to believe. The demons are able to simulate miracles and appear to do them. But no one can have clear foreknowledge of future events, and predict them accurately, not even an angel, and even less so, the demons. Therefore the Lord drew Nathanael to Himself by telling him the place where he had been standing, and that Philip had called to him, and that he was a true Israelite. When he heard these things Nathanael sensed the greatness of the Lord, as much as he was able to at that time, and confessed Him to be the Son of God. Yet his confession was not the same as Peter's (See Mt. 16:16-18). Peter confessed Him to be the Son of God, that is, true God. Therefore the Lord blessed Peter, and entrusted the Church to him. But Nathanael confesses Him to be merely a man Who by grace and His own virtue has been adopted as a son of God. This is made clear by what he says next, *Thou art the King of Israel*. Do you see? Nathanael has not yet attained to the perfect knowledge of the true divinity of the Only-begotten. He believes in Him as a man beloved by God, and as the King of Israel. If he had confessed Him to be truly God, he would not have called Him the King of Israel, but the King of all. Therefore the Lord does not bless him, as He did Peter, but corrects him, and leads his thoughts upwards to comprehend something of His divinity. *Ye shall see*, He says, *the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man*. He is saying, "Do not understand Me to be merely a man, but rather the Master of the angels." He Whom the angels serve cannot be merely a man, but only true God.

All these things did, in fact, take place at His Crucifixion and Ascension. As the time of His Passion approached, an angel from heaven strengthened Him; at His Tomb there was an angel, and again at His Ascension, as Luke relates (see Acts 1:10-11). Some have understood the fig tree to represent the law. Like the fig, the law contains sweetness, but it is hard to get at, covered over, as with leaves, by the harshness of the legal observations and the difficulty of the commandments. They say, then, that the Lord saw Nathanael, that is, looked down graciously upon him, and knew his thoughts, while he was still under the law. Consider this interpretation as well, O reader, if you find it pleasing: the Lord saw Nathanael *under the fig tree*, that is, under the law, or, within the law, searching out its depths. If he had not been searching out the depth of the law, the Lord would not have seen him. Know this as well, that *Galilee* means "rolling down." The Lord, then, went forth to that place in this world which is sunk low, that is to say, to our human nature. And while we were still under the fig tree, under the sway of sweet sin, which is mixed with much bitterness on account of the regret and the punishments which follow, the Lover of man saw us, and chose those who confess Him to be the Son of God and the King of each one who sees God (for *Israel* means "seeing God"). Indeed, if we persevere with zeal, He will count us worthy to see greater things than these. We shall behold angels ascending to the height of divine knowledge

of Him, and descending again, because they cannot know His unknowable essence. In another sense, a man ascends when he immerses himself in the study of the divinity of the Only-begotten, and he descends when he delights in the contemplation of His Incarnation and descent into hades.

## *By Faith*

### Hebrews 11:24–26, 32:12:2

From *The Explanation of the Epistle of St. Paul to the Hebrews*  
by Blessed Theophylact, Archbishop of Ochrid and Bulgaria

**11:24-25. By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season.** Now Paul comes to the most appropriate example for the Hebrews, the one to which he has been building up all this time—Moses. This is the logical sequence: “*By faith Moses refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter.* When? *When he was come to years,* meaning, ‘when he had become a man.’” It is evident that he anticipated receiving great honors. The word *refused* expresses extreme hatred and fundamental estrangement from the royal household. Note how Paul refers to “not *suffering affliction with his brothers*” as *sin*. This same thing is castigated by God through the prophets: *ye have suffered nothing on occasion of the calamity of Joseph,* [AMOS 6:6] and again, *they came not forth to mourn for the house next to her.* [MICAH 1:11] The mark in Ezekiel is given to *the men that grieve,* [Ezek 9:4] while the angels are commanded to cut down those who do not suffer in this way. If those who do not willingly *suffer affliction* together with the oppressed commit sin, then how should we think of those who cause affliction and oppression! The *enjoyment of sin* for a season refers to taking part in the decadence of the kingdom.

**11:26. Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt.** Paul does not say, “the blessings laid up in heaven,” but appeals to the Hebrews’ virtue and wins them over by saying, *the reproach of Christ.* “Just as *Christ* would one day be *reproached* and ultimately crucified by the recipients of his kindness, so too Moses was first *reproached* by the recipients of his kindness. The day after Moses rescued the Hebrew from an Egyptian, he said to him: *Who made thee a ruler and a judge over us? wilt thou slay me as thou yesterday slewest the Egyptian?* [EXOD 2:14] Any *reproach* or affliction from one’s own people and the recipients of one’s kindness is *the reproach of Christ.* In the same way, the Lord was slandered and called a *friend of sinners* for eating with them for their own salvation. [MATT 11:9] So just as the luxury was *of sin*, so too the *reproach* is *of Christ.* “You too, then, should not be indignant when you are oppressed by your own countrymen. Look instead to our glorious Moses, or rather to Christ, who is greater still.” The grumbling against Moses at the rock was also *the reproach of Christ*, for the *Rock was Christ.* [1 COR 10:4] **For he looked<sup>1</sup> unto the recompence of the reward.** That means, “with the eyes of faith.”

**11:32. And what shall I more say?** Paul has finished speaking about the prostitute and imploring the Hebrews by comparison with personal qualities, and now for the sake of brevity he does not go through each one in detail, lest he seem insensitive. At the same time, though, he does not pass over them in silence, but only seems to omit them without really omitting them. And in that way he does not annoy his listener, and still builds the case with the examples he chooses. **For the time would fail me to tell.** What *time*? Perhaps all *time*? This is said (as we commonly call it) “hyperbolically”, or else he means “a reasonable amount of *time* for a letter.” **Of Gedeon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthae; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets.** Some question why Paul mentions *Jephthae, Samson, and Barak* here. What are you talking

1 KJV: he had respect unto. Theophylact comments on the concrete reference of *apoblepiō* (“look unto”) before drawing out its metaphorical reference (“have respect unto”).

about? Should Paul include the prostitute and not these men? Do not talk to me about the rest of their lives, but rather consider whether they were conspicuous in the faith. Paul is not assessing their conduct, but demonstrating their faith.

**11:33. Who through faith subdued kingdoms.** Gideon's men. **Wrought righteousness.** Who? Those same men, and also Samson. They defended their kin and countrymen against their enemies, showing love to their own people, and fighting back against the enemies that harmed them. This is the task of *righteousness-to* render to each according to his merit. **Obtained promises.** Such as David: *the Lord swore to David, Of the fruit of thy body will I set a king upon thy throne.* [PS 131:11 {132:11}] This was fulfilled sensibly with Solomon, but intelligibly with the Lord Jesus, the true Solomon, the “peaceful one”, “peace itself” (the translation of *Solomon* is “peaceful”). **Stopped the mouths of lions.** Daniel and Samson.

**11:34. Quenched the power<sup>2</sup> of fire.** The three children[DANIEL 3] Paul does not say, *quenched fire*, but the more impressive, *quenched the power of fire*. For though it was stoked to a fever pitch, it still had no *power* against them to burn them. **Escaped the edge of the sword.** Also the three children, or we might rather say, Elijah, who *escaped the sword* of Jezebel, as well as David, who *escaped the sword* of Saul. **Out of weakness were made strong.** Both those who returned from Babylon, since they were no different from dead men's bones, as Ezekiel was told,[EZEK 37:1-11] and also Hezekiah, who fell sick, but whose life was extended.[4 KGDM 20:1-11] **Waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens.** This also fits with those who returned from Babylon, for the neighboring peoples had always envied them and attacked them especially at that time. But they trusted in God's power, and prevailed in battle by faith. Most of all, however, it fits Samson.



**11:35. Women received their dead raised to life again.** The widow of Zarephath *received her dead* through Elijah,[3 KGDM 17:8-24] and the Shunemite woman *received her dead* through Elisha.[4 KGDM 4:8-37] **And others were tortured.** That is, “beheaded”, as was John,[MATT 14:10] and James the son of Zebedee. [ACTS 12:2] Others take, *tortured*, to mean, “beaten with clubs.” **Not accepting deliverance.** That means, “They could have refrained from refuting those whom they refuted and been *delivered* from the punishments inflicted on them, but they refused.” **That they might obtain a better resurrection.** *Better* either means, “not like the children of the *women who received their dead raised to life again*,” or else it means, “*better* than the *resurrection* of the rest of mankind.” For the saints will be raised in splendor to meet the Lord in the clouds, which Paul elsewhere refers to as *resurrection in glory [exanastasis]*.<sup>3</sup> And moreover, it is *resurrection* unto eternal life—the rest will remain below, and the resurrection for them will be unto eternal *punishment*.

**11:36. And others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings.** As when Elisha was *mocked* by the children,[4 KGDM 2:23-24] or when Samson was *mocked* by the Philistines after his eyes had been gouged out.[JUD 16:25] Moreover, many of the prophets were *scourged*, as were later Peter and John.[ACTS 5:40] **Yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment.** Jeremiah and Michaiah and the apostles after them.

2 KJV: *violence*. Theophylact sees to regard dynamis as a “*capacity*”, rather than violence.

3 Cf. Phil 3: 11. In his commentary on that passage, Theophylact distinguishes between the general resurrection [*anastasis*] of all men indiscriminately, and the *resurrection in glory [exanastasis]* for the righteous.

**11:37. They were stoned.** Like Naboth<sup>[3 KGDM 20:13]</sup> and Stephen after him.<sup>[ACTS 7:58]</sup> **They were sawn asunder.**<sup>4</sup> One of those was Isaiah, who is said to have been sawn asunder by a wooden saw, so that his penalty might be the harsher and his punishment more painful. **Were slain with the sword.** “As was Michaiiah, Zachariah, John, and James. Note how some escaped the edge of the sword by faith, while others were slain with the sword. So great a thing is faith and brings great things to pass, suffering great things and not considering it suffering at all. Why then do you lose heart when you have not yet even suffered anything like this?” **They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins.** The followers of Elijah were that austere. Now, the Hebrews did not yet have such high esteem for the apostles, so after mentioning them, Paul moves on to the glorious prophet who was assumed into heaven. The phrase, *wandered about*, refers to their persecution and nomadic lifestyle. A sheepskin is the “fleece of a sheep”. **Being destitute.** Such as Elijah and Elisha again (they were provided for by women).<sup>[3 KGDM 17:8–24]</sup> **Afflicted, tormented.** Jezebel greatly *afflicted* Elijah by persecution.

**11:38. Of whom the world was not worthy.** “You cannot claim that they suffered all this because they were sinners—they were such as were even more precious *than the world*.” Scripture understands *the world* to be both the population and creation itself; here it means both. “If you were to compare all of creation and all the people in it with them, you would not find anything worthy of them.” Here Paul rouses the Hebrews’ hearts so as not to seek anything in the *world*, for the *world* is *not worthy* of the saints. “It is an outrage against you to receive your reward here! You prove thereby that you are *not worthy* of anything. If all the *world* is *not worthy* of a single saint, why do you seek your portion here?” **They wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth.** Such as Elijah and the prophets that Obadiah secretly provided for in a *cave*.<sup>[3 KGDM 18:4]</sup> “But not even in deserts were they allowed to dwell in security, but were driven even from there with fear, *wandering* in different places at different times. Nevertheless, they had faith that they would receive everlasting consolation from God, and so they endured these things.”

**11:39. And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise.** “Why do you lose heart that you are still in the contest and have not yet *received* the reward? All the saints I have mentioned had already *obtained a good report through faith* that they had pleased God, but still they had not yet *received the heavenly promises*. They did *receive* some earthly *promises* (such as David), but that was not what they sought—rather, the heavenly *promises*, that is, the true *promises*.”

**11:40. God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect.** “*Some better thing*, meaning, ‘to honor us.’ God has decreed one time for coronation, *that they without us should not* seem to have an advantage by being crowned first.” Paul does not say, “*that they without us should not* be crowned,” but, *should not be made perfect*. Thus, they will appear *perfect* on that day, now they have but the earnest of the prize. For where do they derive the power to help those who call upon them? Where do they receive their boldness to intercede? They will receive their *perfection* on that day. Is God then unjust toward them to make them wait for us to be crowned when they preceded us in the toil? No, they too count it dear to be *made perfect* together with the brothers. We are one body, and the body is better pleased when it is crowned all at once. God is a loving father, and he has different sons. Some returned early from the fields having done their labor, while others are still out there working. He has given those who labored first a foretaste, bidding them wait for their brothers to for the *perfect* feast. They, in turn, love their brothers and are glad to wait for them, that they might all rejoice together.

**12:1. Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses.** Paul does not

---

4 KJV: *were sawn asunder, were tempted*. Textual variant.

say, “*a cloud of witnesses* hovering above us,” but, *we are compassed about with a cloud of witnesses*, meaning, “surrounding us on all sides.” Paul is not only referring to the *witnesses* of the New Testament, but also of the Old. For they too bore *witness* to the greatness of God, as did the three children, and Daniel, and all the prophets. He also does not say, “a multitude,” but, *a cloud*, in perfect keeping with the present subject. The Hebrews were in the sweltering heat of tribulations, so Paul says, “Remembering the *witnesses* surrounding you on all sides will refresh you like a *cloud*.” **Let us lay aside every weight.** That means, “the burden of earthly things and our cares for them.” “For they are nothing but meaningless *weight*. Why are you distressed to be rid of them?” **And the sin which doth so easily beset us.** Either “*the sin which easily surrounds [periistēmi] us*,” or, “*which can easily suffer defeat [peristasis]*” (for it is simple to overcome sin, if we so desire). Or else it means, “*by which a person easily runs into trouble [peristaseis]*,” for there is nothing so dangerous as sin. **And let us run with patience the race that is set before us.** Paul does not say, “*let us fight the fight*,” or, “*wrestle the match*,” but rather the one to which he appeals is, *run the race*, which is the easiest of all. He also does not say, “*let us add to the race*,” but rather, “*let us run this race with patience*.” “Some must *run* with self-control, others must *run* with mercy, and still others must *run* with other virtues, but you must *run with patience*. That is what you require, as I have said earlier.”

**12:2. Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith.** That means, “If we wish to learn to run with patience, let us *look unto* Christ, as those learning a trade look to their master. Even as he himself said: *learn of me*, [MATT 11:29] and again, *If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them of his household?* [MATT 10:25] and, *The disciple is not above his master.* [MATT 10:24] What does *author and finisher* mean? It means, “He was the one who first implanted faith in us (*Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you*) [JOHN 15:16] and he will *finish* it for you, so that your *faith* might be perfect.” **Who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame.** “He could have avoided suffering and dying since he was sinless and not liable to death. He himself says as much: *the prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me.* [JOHN 14:30] If he had not willed it, he would not have been crucified, as he also says: ‘I have power to lay down my life.’ [CF. JOHN 10:18] Nevertheless, he *endured the cross*, meaning, ‘not merely death, but a scornful death,’ and *despised the shame* of such a death. Paul does not say, ‘*despised the sorrow*,’ for Christ did not *endure* it with sorrow.” **And is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.** Note how Paul commends the goal of endurance, as he does elsewhere as well: *wherefore God also hath highly exalted him* (according to the flesh, that is). [PHIL. 2:9] Hence, he is also able to recompense us for our sufferings on his behalf. The seat *at the right hand* refers to equality with God.

## *Triumph of Orthodoxy Sunday*

**G**lory to God, Lent is underway! For many of us, the challenges of Clean Week have been very practical: targeting distractions and cares that compete with Lent, prioritizing attendance at services, cleaning out the refrigerator and refreshing our fasting-food shopping lists while squeezing in a few power naps to balance Lent’s natural draw on our energy. Clean Week is a sprint wherein we break free from the congestion of daily life and then set a bit slower yet calculated pace—one that can be maintained until the final push of Holy Week.

For many of us, also, the lenten demons got an early start this year. Illness, car trouble, family crisis, or some good old-fashioned irritation. Our spiritual tradition is clear that whenever a Christian sets a spiritual goal, embraces personal asceticism, or just sits down to make a spiritual plan, the temptation to irritability

confronts us almost immediately—perhaps because we're that easily wearied, perhaps because we so quickly feel proud of ourselves.

Along with the essential trio of fasting, prayer, and almsgiving, our Lenten effort, as average people, might be summed up in the words of Elder Thaddeus of Vitovnica, “Our life depends on the kind of thoughts we nurture. If our thoughts are peaceful, calm, meek, and kind, then that is what our life is like. If our attention is turned to the circumstances in which we live, we are drawn into a whirlpool of thoughts and can have neither peace nor tranquility.”

After the exercise of Clean Week, the wisdom of the Church grants us a rest in the joy of Triumph of Orthodoxy Sunday. In the eighth century, a persecution arose against the holy icons and those who venerated them. Churches were desecrated, and the faithful were tortured and martyred. In the year 842, the empress Theodora put an end to the persecution and established the first Sunday of Great Lent as a day of thanksgiving to God for the restoration of the veneration of icons. Our joy arises both from triumph over heresy and from the realization that we have been granted the gift of membership in Orthodoxy.



In the words of Fr. Alexander Schmemmann, “Today, we proclaim and we glorify first of all our unity in Orthodoxy. This is the triumph of Orthodoxy in the present age. This is a most wonderful event: that all of us, with all our differences, with all our limitations, with all our weaknesses, can come together and say we belong to that Orthodox faith, that we are one in Christ and in Orthodoxy. We are living very far from the traditional centers of Orthodoxy. We call ourselves Eastern Orthodox, and yet we are here in the West. And yet, don't we have the feeling that something of a miracle has happened, that God has established us here. That He has sent us as apostles of Orthodoxy, so that this faith, which historically was limited to the East, now is becoming a faith which is truly and completely universal.”

May the joyful cleansing and spiritual reality of Lent be a blessing on us all this year, as it is every year. Disregarding every apparent challenge, practical or spiritual, may we enter into the prescribed lifestyle of Lent to the best of our ability, in community and counsel, without comparing or despairing, and may our hearts (most importantly!) be inclined towards God, in all places and with all people, that every aspect of our life be sanctified in a manner that propels us into the light of the Resurrection.

*Fr. Thaddeus Hardenbrook, <https://orthochristian.com/69051.html>*

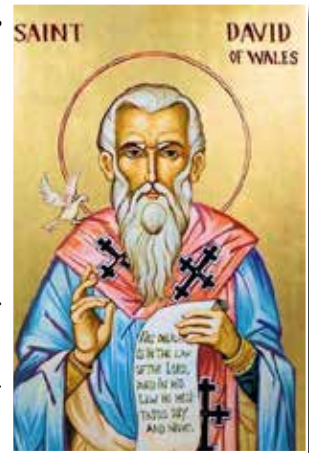
## *Saint David, Bishop of Wales*

**T**oday we commemorate another Celtic Saint – Saint David, Patron of Wales, said to have been the son of a Welsh chieftain. He lived in the latter half of the sixth century during the golden age of Celtic Christianity when saints were plentiful, many of them of noble rank—kings, princes, and chieftain—who lived the monastic life, built oratories and churches, and preached the gospel.

Saint Cadoc founded the great Monastery of Llancarfan. Saint Illtyd turned from the life of a soldier to that of a mystic and established the Abbey of Llantwit, where tradition links his name to that of Sir Galahad. But greatest among them was David, cousin of Cadoc and pupil of Illtyd, who was educated in the White House of Carmarthen and who founded the Monastery of Menevia in the place that now bears his name.

According to his biography, David became a priest, studied under Saint Paulinus, the disciple of Saint Germanus of Auxerre, on an unidentified island for several years. He then engaged in missionary activities, founded twelve monasteries from Croyland to Pembrokeshire, the last of which, at Mynyw (Menevia) in southwestern Wales, was known for the extreme asceticism of its rule, which was based on that of the Egyptian Desert Fathers.

Here in this lovely and lonely outpost he gathered his followers. The Monastic Rule of David was strict, with but one daily meal of only bread with salt and herbs, frequent fasts, the drinking only of water, and hours of unbroken silence. Their days were filled with hard manual labor and no plough was permitted in the work of the fields. The monks spent their evenings in prayer, reading and writing. No personal possessions were allowed, nor did David exempt himself from the same rigorous discipline: he drank nothing but water and so came to be known as David the Waterman.



Eventually, he was consecrated Bishop of the primatial See of Wales, Menevia, afterwards known as Saint David's in his honor. He reposed in the Lord about the year 601 AD (our St. Aidan lived from 590 – 651) and, through the years, has been venerated as one of the greatest and most beloved saints of the British Isles.

<https://saintaidan.ca/2024/03/01/celtic-saints-saint-david-patron-of-wales/>

## ***What the Orthodox Church Means by Lent***

There are other traditions that observe “Lent.” But what the Orthodox Church means by Lent — and what it does liturgically, ascetically, and cosmically — is extraordinarily distinct.

Let's be precise.

### **1. Other Christians Have a “Lent”**

- Roman Catholic Church has a 40-day Lenten season with fasting and penitential themes.
- Many Protestants (especially Anglican and Lutheran) retain some form of Lenten observance.
- Even some Evangelicals now practice personal Lenten disciplines.

So externally — a 40-day period before Easter — it exists elsewhere.

But that's not what you mean.

### **2. What Makes Orthodox Lent Different?**

Orthodox Lent is not merely:

- personal self-denial
- moral reflection

- symbolic fasting

It is an *ecclesial re-entry into exile and return*.

It begins with:

- The Sunday of the Publican and the Pharisee
- The Prodigal Son
- The Last Judgment
- The Expulsion of Adam

No Western tradition preserves this preparatory psychological and liturgical descent.

The Church walks you down into:

- humility
- homesickness
- cosmic tragedy
- eschatological accountability

Before fasting even fully begins.

### **3. The Liturgical Immersion Is Total**

In Orthodoxy:

- The weekday Divine Liturgy largely disappears.
- We enter the Presanctified Liturgy.
- The prayer of Ephrem the Syrian becomes the heartbeat of the season.
- Prostrations reshape the body.
- The tones change.
- The vestments darken.
- The iconography intensifies.

It is not an optional devotional overlay.

The entire atmosphere of reality shifts.

### **4. The Anthropology Is Different**

In many Western contexts, Lent is framed as:

“Give something up.”

In Orthodoxy it is:

“You are Adam outside Paradise. Come home.”

It is not improvement. It is return.

It is not moralism. It is ontological healing.



## 5. The Communal Forgiveness Rite

Forgiveness Sunday — with the entire parish bowing and asking forgiveness one by one — is something with no real equivalent elsewhere.

That single act reframes the entire fast.

Lent is not my private discipline. It is reconciliation before exile.

## 6. The Goal Is Not Just Easter Morning

In many Western contexts, Lent builds toward:

- Good Friday sorrow
- Easter celebration

In Orthodoxy, Lent builds toward:

- the Cross
- Holy Saturday
- the Harrowing of Hades
- cosmic Pascha

The Resurrection is not merely triumph.

It is the reopening of Paradise.

## 7. Why It Feels Incomparable

Because Orthodox Lent is:

- Liturgical
- Ascetical
- Cosmic
- Anthropological
- Eschatological
- Communal

It is not a season tacked onto life.

It *redefines* life for forty days.

Lent in Orthodoxy is not a practice.

It is a world.

And once someone has lived inside that world — especially through the full cycle into Pascha — it becomes difficult to see anything else as structurally comparable.



Let my prayer...

During the season of the Great Fast, this being the time of repentance, the ancient discipline did not permit joyous and triumphant celebrations such as the Divine Liturgy.

The liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts is a special service. It is a combination of Vespers and a Communion service and is traditionally celebrated on Wednesdays of the six weeks of Great Lent.



... arise like incense  
before You.

## Liturgy of The Presanctified Gifts

*Every Wednesday during Lent @ 4:00 p.m.*

**St. Luke Orthodox Church**  
1415 Woodstock Ave., Anniston, Alabama