



CHURCH of the LIFE-GIVING FOUNTAIN
“ZODOCHOS PEGHE”
GREEK ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE OF AMERICA
ΙΕΡΑ ΑΡΧΙΕΠΙΣΚΟΠΗ ΑΜΕΡΙΚΗΣ
314 North Fifth Street Martins Ferry, OH 43935
Telephone: (740) 633-3707

God is Glorious in His Saints

The month of February starts with the Feast of the Presentation of the Lord in the Temple on the 2nd. This is the close of the 40 day period that began with the Nativity of Christ on December 25th. “Now, when the days of her purification according to the law of Moses were complete, they brought Him to Jerusalem to present Him to the Lord (as it is written in the law of the Lord, “*Every male who opens the womb shall be called holy to the Lord*”) Luke 2:22.” At that time the elderly Simeon, who had been promised by the Lord that he would not die until he has seen the Messiah, received Him and gave thanks for “A light to bring revelation to the nations and the glory of Your people Israel”. *Ypapanti*, Presentation is one of the 12 Great Feasts of the Church calendar and is a very suitable day for us to prepare and to receive communion, to be presented to Christ and to receive Christ who is presented to us in Holy Communion.

On February 7 the Church remembers the parable in Matthew 25 of those who were given stewardship of a few “talents” and what they did with that with which they were entrusted. On this Sunday also we will celebrate in our parish Godparent Sunday, remembering the connection between Godparents and the Godchildren with whom they are entrusted. It is a good day to come together as extended family. If we cannot be physically with them, then let us hold them in prayer before the Lord. If that relationship has not been as “successful” as we might have hoped, if we have not multiplied the blessing the Lord has offered us, then there is all the more reason for prayer on this day. If at all possible, attend the Liturgy on this day and let Godparents and Godchildren receive communion together.

On February 14th the Church remember the Canaanite woman and her great faith as recorded in Matthew 15. It is always revealing to consider the way Christ deals with “unbelievers”. He reminds us that when we are proud of our ancestry and or right faith, the Holy Spirit – like water – flows down upon the lowly and humble. Christ tested and revealed the humility of the Canaanite woman, who even when insulted persevered and humbly continued to ask the Lord’s help, and she was greatly rewarded. On February 14th the Church also remembers St. Cyril, Equal-to-the-Apostles, who was sent by St. Photios to evangelize the Slavs and not only

translated the Scriptures and Liturgy into their language but even invented an alphabet to write the previously unwritten language. May this be an example to us.

On February 21st we start the liturgical season of the Triodion, the beginning of the long preparation for Pascha. Continuing from the Canaanite woman on the previous Sunday, the Church gives us the lesson of the Publican and the Pharisee (Luke 18). The Pharisee was a good man who kept all the practices of his religion. He fasted and was charitable and was regular in prayer at the Temple. He was also proud of this. The Publican, a tax-collector, was not good. He was a crook and a traitor. But he recognized this and *humbly* stood just near the Temple and begged forgiveness. And that tax-collector when home righteous in the sight of God. As we enter this season, let us seek to follow his model. As an introduction to Orthodox fasting, the Church starts by making this week following the Pharisee and the Publican *Fast Free*. The ordinary Wednesday and Friday fasting is suspended and meat is permitted throughout this week, no restriction of food.

February 28 is the Sunday of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15). God gives us everything and we are free to enjoy in His presence. But humanity as a whole and each of us individually become impatient. We want our own. And as soon as we get what we think is due to us, we take off and squander it in our own self-abuse. With God, we can enjoy the whole world; without God, nothing satisfies and we sink deeper and deeper into the mud. Still, the Father is always more than ready to welcome us back.

The week following the Prodigal is again an “ordinary” week. The Church tradition calls for Wednesday and Friday to be fasting days.

As most of us know, the Orthodox calculation of Easter/Pascha is not that same as is followed by the Western Churches, whether Roman Catholic or Protestant. Pope Gregory XIII of Rome unilaterally changed the calculation in 1582. There were various perceived astronomical reasons for this. Various countries adopted the Gregorian calendar for civil usage at various times. Britain and thus the American colonies only adopted it in 1752. The government of Greece adopted the Gregorian calendar in 1923 and the Greek speaking Orthodox Churches including Constantinople, Cyprus and Greece adopted a modified calendar at that time. The Russian and Serbian Churches have still not modified their calendars, leading to their celebration of the Birth of Christ on December 25th being on January 7th on the American civil calendar – with all the confusion that goes with this. **No Orthodox Church** has accepted Pope Gregory’s change of the calculation of Pascha. **All Orthodox Churches** continue to calculate Pascha together as was established at the First Ecumenical Council in Nicea. Roman Catholics and some Protestants start Lent with Ash Wednesday, a liturgical day which does not exist in Orthodox practice. Ash Wednesday is February 10th this year. Lent for Orthodox Christians starts on Clean Monday which is March 14th this year.



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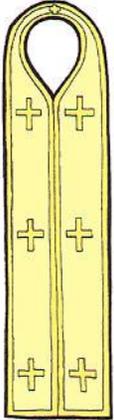
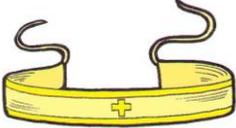
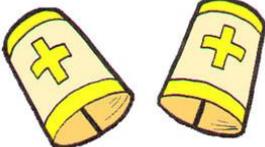
Metropolitan Savas continuing at the Ordination of Fr. Anastasios Athanasiou

I want to stress that you are not leaving your deaconate behind. You're adding to your deaconate. You're exercising your deaconate in a different way. Because deaconate is service, it's ministry. It's not a vestibule that you pass through on the way to the priesthood. It's not the appetizer before the main course. As Christ said of Himself: Whoever would be greatest of you must be your deacon. We translate that as servant, but the Greek word is deacon. I came not to be deaconed to but to be the deacon. So the deacon is the image of Christ in a very particular way.

Now you are entering into a new dimension of your priesthood. I invite you to imagine. We are going to vest you now with the vestments that are proper to your new ministry. This distinguishing vestment with the orarion which sets you apart from an acolyte or subdeacon is not going to be taken from you but is wrapped around you in a new way. You will wear it as a stole and as an icon of the mercy that flows from above, the mercy that God pours on the penitent when he comes to you for confession. The mercy without which you cannot do any service of the Lord. The loving self-emptying of God. That's Christ's defining characteristic, this loving self-emptying. We're not ordaining you to lord it over these people but to image Christ in loving these people. And yes your family is your closest love, but in Christ we are all family.

Once again we will bring you to the Holy Altar. You've been through these doors as a deacon. Now you're going in as a deacon and coming out as a priest. Once again you're going to venerate the Holy Table where the sacrifice happens, where the Gifts are offered and the Holy Spirit descends. You're going to kiss its four corners and you're going to be led around three times. Each time you will be led by two of your priestly brothers.

With this introduction by Metropolitan Savas, we will consider the vestments of the priest. In previous months we have considered the Holy Altar itself and its consecration, then the three levels of our iconostasis with the main icons of the Lord, His Mother and the saints. Now let's look at the garments that the priest wears. These are the garments of the priest, but they are symbols of the Grace with which every Christian should be clothed.

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|  | <p>The first garment which the priest puts on is the <i>sticharion</i>. This is a long liturgical robe that reaches down to the floor and has long sleeves. It symbolizes the spiritual cleanliness which the priest must possess when he is offering the Eucharist.</p> <p>When the priest puts on the <i>sticharion</i> he prays using a verse from the Psalms: “My soul shall rejoice in the Lord, for He hath clothed me with the garment of salvation, and with the robe of gladness hath He encompassed me. As a bridegroom He hath set a crown on me, and as a bride hath He adorned me with ornament, always, now and ever, and unto the ages of ages. Amen”</p> |
|  | <p>The next garment which the priest puts on is the stole or <i>epitrachelion</i> or stole. Literally, in Greek, this means “around the neck”. This long narrow garment is the basic sign of an ordained servant of God. We see it even in the sash that is wrapped around an altar server who is tonsured as a reader by the bishop. In another form it is worn by a deacon over one shoulder. The priest’s stole is worn over both shoulders and is stitched together reaching nearly to the ankles. It usually has crosses on it and at the bottom two bands of fringe which stand for the souls of the living and the dead for whom the priest is to pray. The stole symbolizes the spiritual yoke of the priesthood and the grace of the Holy Spirit poured over the priest for the sake of the people.</p> <p>The prayer is: “Blessed is God, who pours out his grace on his priests, as oil of myrrh upon the head, which runs down upon his beard, upon the beard of Aaron, which runs down to the fringe of his garment, always, now, and ever, unto the ages of ages. Amen.” It is the one vestment always necessary for a priest to conduct any liturgical service.</p> |
|  | <p>Next is the belt, <i>zoni</i>. It symbolizes his readiness for service and reminds us of the towel with which Christ washed the apostles’ feet.</p> <p>The prayer is: “Blessed is God, who girdeth me with power and hath made my path blameless, always, now and ever, and to the ages of ages.”</p> |
|  | <p>The cuffs then go on his wrists. “Thy right hand, O Lord, is glorified in strength; Thy right hand, O Lord, hath shattered thine enemies, and in the multitude of Thy glory hast Thou crushed thine adversaries, Always, now and ever and unto the ages of ages. Amen.”</p> <p>“Thy hands have made and fashioned me; give me understanding and I will learn Thy commandments, always, now and ever, and unto the ages of ages. Amen.”</p> |
| | <p>The <i>phelonion</i> is a large, sleeveless, cape-like vestment worn over everything else. The front reaches just above the waist to allow the movement of the priest’s hands while the back hangs low toward the ankles. The prayer for this reads: “Thy priests, O Lord, shall be clothed with righteousness, and thy holy ones shall rejoice with joy, always, now and ever, and unto the ages of ages. Amen.</p> |



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The Earth is the Lord’s

The Book of the Word: Reading God's creation excerpts from Elizabeth Theokritoff

A philosopher once asked St Anthony, 'How do you manage, Father, deprived of the consolation of books?' Anthony replied: 'My book, O philosopher, is the nature of created things, and this is before me whenever I wish to read the words of God'.

This often-quoted saying of the father of monasticism (251-356) captures well the ancient Christian attitude to the world round us. It is not primarily a resource, nor even a trust for us to look after, but above all a means to learning the ways and will of God. The roots of this understanding go deep into the Old Testament, where 'the heavens declare the glory of God' (Ps 19:1) and Job invokes the animals, plants and fish who recognise the action of the Lord (Jb 12: 7-8).

The image of 'the book of creation' has been remarkably enduring in the Christian world, both East and West. But that very fact easily masks some dramatic changes in understanding of what sort of book it is, how we are to read it and what we may properly expect to learn from it. The divergence in the way the two 'books' are viewed has much to do with what is usually described as the 'desacralisation of nature' in the West.

St. Maximus never tires of exploring the parallels and complementarities between the two books in which the Creator Word has inscribed himself for our sake. The double revelation is for him a distinction without division: the distinction is made in order to show how very different expressions can actually be saying the same thing. Creation and Scripture (by which he means primarily the Old Testament), the natural law and the written law are equally essential for drawing near to God. They 'are of equal value and equal dignity, both of them teach the same things in complementary ways, and neither has the advantage over the other or stands in the other's shadow. Creation and Scripture alike are fulfilled in Christ, in the 'law of grace'; and the relationship between the three is so close that we may

speak of a 'triple embodiment' of the Word; in Creation and in Scripture and in the Incarnation in Bethlehem.

Reading creation with obedience: 'Obedient receptivity to God's word', Bishop Kallistos reminds us, involves a *sense of wonder* and an *attitude of listening*. The importance of a sense of wonder is very often stressed today, both by those whose wonder issues in praise to the Creator and by those who would put 'wonderful life' itself in his place as the proper object of awe. *The book of creation is to be understood through the Church*. Environmentally aware Christians generally recognize the importance of integrating the material world into our worship, our spiritual life, our relationship with God. *The book of creation is Christ-centred*. Creation, read aright, can never be a centre because it always points beyond itself.

Perhaps, the recognition of creation as charged with the words of God has the power radically to change our attitude to everything we touch. It calls us to an attitude less of stewardship than 'studentship'. The most basic way of taking care of a book is to maintain it in legible condition.

Limiting our wants and appetites ceases to be simply a moral obligation for the sake of sharing resources more equitably and becomes the fast that prepares us for reading, placing between ourselves and the world "a wondering and respectful distance", within which space everything becomes an object of contemplation. And our reading will keep sending us back with renewed awe to the book of creation which we hold in our hands.

The divine Word may be said to 'become concrete' because of his incarnation, 'or because He has ineffably encrypted Himself for us in the inner principles of existent things, and is correspondingly spelled out by each visible thing as by letters', or again because he has deigned to be embodied for our sake and formulated in the letters and syllables of Scripture. The Word desires us to read him in both books but neither is easy; both require effort and diligence, and carry an equal danger of misreading. The letter can blind us to the Spirit, and the outward appearance of natural things to their meaning. The letter kills, if we love it for its own sake, and 'literalism' in reading the creation is no less dangerous: the beauty of created things can easily rob the beholder of reverence if it is not looked at to the glory of its Creator. In both Scripture and creation we need to go beyond the letter and to discern the meaning of the words. But what exactly are the 'words' of creation?

"Then Jacob awoke from his sleep and said, 'Surely the Lord is in this place, and I knew it not'" (Gen 28:16).

