



St. Herman of Alaska Eastern Orthodox Church

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"An Orthodox Presence in Northeastern Summit County"

www.sainthermanchurch.org



Important This Week—Nativity Fast All Week

NO Adult Study

Saturday, 20Dec, NO Vigil

Sunday, 21Dec, 10AM Divine Liturgy

14Dec25

27th Sunday After Pentecost/Holy Forefathers

The Road to Humility

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. (Gen 1:1) He is God. He is Creator. As Creator, there is more Scripture to define Him. For in Him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through Him and for Him. (Col 1:16) So not only are all things in His creation sourced by His Holy will, but all things belong to Him. They are His, and in His mercy He provides all things to accomplish His holy will.

In that image of His will being accomplished through His creation, He remains all-powerful. I make known the end from the beginning, from ancient times, what is still to come. I say, 'My purpose will stand, and I will do all that I please.' (Isa 46:10)

In His nature, He is beyond the limits of nature. Behold, heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain You. (1Kings 8:27)

He is Sovereign, our King, the King of kings and Lord of lords. (1Tim 6:15)

What more do we need to say to

establish the credentials of our God? He is the Creator of all things, He is above all things, He is the Ruler of all things.

Having said ALL of this:

Within these next two weeks we, who hope to be found worthy to be called servants of our God, will become witnesses, not of some monumental display of superiority, but of monumental humility.

He Who sits eternally at the right hand of the Father in His glory comes within the womb of a young maiden, to be born as is any human being, and to be laid in a manger, a feeding trough for animals. He comes offering the fullness of God to be united to us in fullness as Man. And in His divine offering, He creates a path to salvation for all of humanity—for all who will choose to receive the gift He brings.

What do we see as we gaze into the cave where He is laid as a child? We see His Virgin Mother, one who loves Him as the Child she has carried these many months, but one who loves Him in a way that must include, even if imperfectly, the vision of His divinity, for she knows His concep-

tion is beyond nature. We find lowly animals, witnesses from His creation to His arrival. We find an elderly man who will offer himself as a guardian for as long as He determines is Joseph's lot. We find hosts of angels offering glory to God.

There is a stichera on Lord I Call from the Vespers of Nativity that speaks to what the world has to offer in return.

What shall we offer You, O Christ, Who for our sakes has appeared on earth as man? Every creature made by You offers thanks: Angels offer their hymn, and the heavens a star. Wise men bring gifts as the shepherds wonder. The earth offers a cave, and the wilderness offers a manger. And we, Your people, offer You a virgin mother! O Pre-eternal God, have mercy on us!

He Who will come again in glory comes in humility. He Who comes to give His life for His creation comes to assume that life so that He can show us the way to salvation. And we, like the angels, stand in awe and wonder at His humility for us and his mercy towards us.

This Week's Prayer Requests

For Health—St. Herman's: Met. Joseph, Pat, Sandra, Richard, Sam, Judy, Mitchell, Joe, Christian, Al, Sam, Fr.Dn.Basil, Nikandra, Fr.Jerome, Nora & Bob, Lori, Bill
For the Departed: Patriarchs Maxim and Neofit, Metropolitans Theodosius

and Maximos, Archpriest Stephan, Popadia Marika, Matushka Illaria, Nun Theophania, Matushka Theodora, Stephen, Reader Charles, Betty Lou, Lainey Kay, Katherine, Jeanne, Margaret, Lenni, Deaconessa Nana

Weekly Statistics

Saturday	Divine Liturgy	06Dec	10 faithful	15 views
	Vigil	29Nov	8 faithful	12 views
Sunday	Divine Liturgy	30Nov	45 faithful	29 views

In the News

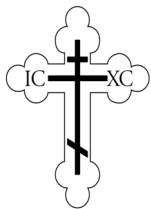
Videos of services can be found at:
https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCfAOKICLMmH_-FIDe8SoWOW

NO Adult Study and Enquirer's sessions this Thursday and Friday evenings.

There will also be **NO VIGIL** this coming Saturday, 20Dec, as Father Basil will be out of town that day.

Next service on the schedule will be Divine Liturgy on Sunday, 21Dec at 10AM.

We've ALL Seen This....



*The soul is
restored to
health by
silence.*

**(St. Isaac the
Syrian)**

The Prayer Rule [Abbot Tryphon]

One medicine for the heart is the use of a "Prayer Rule." This "Rule" is of great importance, for the prayer rule helps develop the discipline we all need to progress, spiritually. It is one of the great tools the Orthodox Way has to offer, and has been handed down, from the earliest of times, through the Fathers of the Church. This "art of prayer," comes from the experience of the Early Church.

Along with keeping the fasting rules of the Church, including the Wednesday and Friday fasts, the Prayer Rule, given to you by your Spiritual Father, Spiritual Mother, or, your Confessor, is the medicine that will help you progress, spiritually, on your journey to God.

If you do not already own a Jordanville Prayer Book (they can be purchased directly from Holy Trinity Monastery, in Jordanville, New York,) I would strongly suggest you purchase one. The language used is the best of English "liturgical language," and better serves, I believe, the inner life. Common pedestrian language is fine for everyday communication, but formal English liturgical language, when spoken to God, creates the sacred space one reserves for the Lord.

The Morning and Evening Prayers should be said as though one's life depended on it, for, in a profound way, our spiritual life DOES depend on it. The Precommunion Prayers as well as the Postcommunion Prayers, together with abstinence from all food and drink from midnight on prior to receiving the Holy

Mysteries, is also a discipline that not only is commanded by the Church, but properly prepares us for the reception of Our Lord's Body and Blood. It is in the reception of Christ's Body and Blood that we receive healing of both body and soul.

Use of the Jesus Prayer, "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me a sinner," throughout the day, aids us in a most powerful way to live our life focused on Christ. There is power in the Name of Jesus and this prayer fulfills Saint Paul's instruction to "pray always." The Jesus Prayer, also known as the Prayer of the Heart, gives us the strength to walk with Jesus throughout the day, even when driving through heavy traffic, weeding in the garden, waiting for the bus, or sitting in a long board meeting.

Finally, it is important to remember that the Church, as defined by the Early Church Fathers, is not a religious institution, but, rather, a living organism that is the Hospital for the Soul. Her priests, who first sought therapy for themselves, ultimately became the therapists in this hospital. Therefore, the frequent use of the "tools" given to us by Christ, through His Church, are of the utmost importance for our spiritual progress. Weekly confession, as well as weekly reception of the Holy Eucharist, gives us spiritual strength, and enables us to live "in the world," without being "of the world."

Lastly, whenever we meet a priest, we should ask for a blessing, remembering that it is not his blessing we are seeking, but the blessing of the Lord Jesus Christ,

Who's priesthood the clergyman participates in. When addressing a priest, or bishop, in a written form, whether by letter, or email, it is a good and pious practice to always ask for a blessing. This can be done, if it be a bishop, by writing, "Master, bless." If a priest, "Father, bless." Just before signing your name, "Kissing your right hand, and asking your prayers." Again, this is NOT about the bishop, or the priest, but ALL about Christ, Who's blessing we seek. It is much the same with the veneration of icons, for when we kiss the icon of a saint, we not only show our love and respect to the saint, and seek their intercessory prayers, but we are kissing Jesus Christ, Who dwells in His saints.

Because Orthodoxy is "holistic," in nature, our living out this Faith should not be confined to Sunday morning. If we were a pianist, and made our living playing with an orchestra, we wouldn't think of going through a week without daily practice, for we'd not be in the orchestra for long. As well, a marriage that is not worked at, on a daily basis, is doomed to ultimate failure, for a relationship between two people requires work.

If we expect to have a relationship with God, and have Him dwell in our hearts, and commune with Him, we have to treat our spiritual life as something important, and something that we are committed to. An occasional Sunday Liturgy does not suffice, if we expect to grow in Faith and Wisdom.

Archpastoral Nativity Message from His Eminence Metropolitan JOSEPH

Beloved fathers, brothers, and sisters in the Christ Who is born,

God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets (Heb. 1:1), proclaimed the coming of the Messiah, the Deliverer from the ancestral sin. This proclamation was gradual. Already in Paradise, when God spoke to the fallen Adam and Eve, He foretold the Redeemer Who would be born of the seed of the woman: "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, and you shall be on guard for His heel" (Gen. 3:15).

The preparation of Israel for the coming of Christ was carried out in many ways, but of particular importance was the role of the holy prophets in the spiritual upbringing of the people. The prophets proclaimed and vividly depicted the image of the Messiah centuries before His Incarnation, Nativity, and public ministry—so vividly that one is filled with awe before God and His servants, the prophets of the Old Covenant.

The Nativity of Christ, and the wondrous mystery of the One born in the cave of Bethlehem, was foretold in a heart-stirring way by the Prophet Isaiah: "Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and you shall call His name Immanuel" (Isa. 7:14). Yet we often forget the Great Light—the Son of God—Whom the same prophet describes at the beginning of chapter 9: "The people who walked in darkness saw a great light; those who dwell in the land and shadow of death, a light will shine upon them" (Isa. 9:2).

Light is a divine attribute. In Holy Scripture, God Himself is called the true Light: "The Lord is my light and my savior; whom shall I fear?" (Ps. 26:1). And again, "And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it" (John 1:5). This Light desires that people partake of it, receive it, and follow it. Thus God saves His people not only from foreign invaders, but also His new people—the Orthodox Christians—from the darkness of sin and of Hades.

The time of the manifestation of the Light has been fulfilled, and God proclaims a time of joy—joy that comes from Him. The great and true joy is brought about by the birth of the Child-King in royal courts. A King Who brings the long-awaited deliverance from sin and death. This King is the Incarnate Word of God, our Lord Jesus Christ, Who for our salvation became like us in all things except sin (Rom. 8:3).

His reign is eternal, and although He humbled Himself and took the form of a servant at His Birth (Phil. 2:7–8), He in no way lost His divine dignity and majesty. The names given to this Child reveal His qualities: "For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given, and the government shall be upon His shoulder. His name shall be called the Angel of Great Counsel, Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace" (Isa. 9:6).

Peace is not merely the absence of war, but a divine gift—the reconciliation of sinful humanity with God through the sacrifice of Christ on Golgotha. For this reason His peace shall have no end, and His reign is everlasting. The Child is the true Anointed One, possessing in fullness the gifts of the Holy Spirit: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because the Lord anointed Me; He sent Me to preach good tidings to the poor, to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind..." (Isa. 61:1–2). Unlike priests, kings, and prophets of the Old Covenant, who were anointed to serve as mediators between God and man, Christ Himself is the Divine Person, the true Mediator.

As Prophet, the Lord Jesus Christ proclaims the acceptable year of the Lord—the New Covenant (Isa. 61:2). As High Priest, He offered Himself as a pure and spotless sacrifice for our sins. As true King, He is the Head of His Church and will reign forever in His Kingdom. His reign must begin here on earth in our hearts, that we may share with Him in His eternal Kingdom.

Christ reigns with justice and righteousness. He alone is righteous and will render judgment on the Last Day: "When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory. All the nations will be gathered before Him..." (Matt. 25:31–32). The work of redemption is accomplished by the Lord Jesus Christ, of Whom it is written: "The zeal of the Lord of Hosts will perform this" (Isa. 9:7).

In the Old Testament, God is often described as a jealous God: "...For I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God" (Ex. 20:5). He zealously guards His people when they fall away from the true worship of the one God and begin to serve idols: "The idols of the nations are silver and gold, the work of men's hands" (Ps. 134:15). God's zeal is closely bound with His divine might, by which He is revealed as the Almighty, the Victor. For us, the greatest of His victories is that of the Cross—victory over sin and death—a victory to which we must also become partakers with God's help in our earthly lives.

The people of the Old Covenant awaited with trembling the manifestation of the wondrous Divine Light—that Light of which the holy Apostle and Evangelist John the Theologian writes: "And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it" (John 1:5). The manifestation of this uncreated Light, which existed before the foundation of the world, was foretold by the Prophet Isaiah. This Light is the Wonderful Counselor, the Child-King, our Lord Jesus Christ.

The Bulgarian Eastern Orthodox Diocese of the USA, Canada, and Australia likewise awaits with reverence the Day of Christ's Nativity. In these forefeast days we prepare ourselves so that our hearts may become Bethlehem caves, wherein Christ may be born, to illumine us with His unwaning and transfiguring Light, and to make us like unto Him.

A Blessed Nativity of Christ and a Joyful New Year 2026!

+JOSEPH

Metropolitan of the USA, Canada, and Australia

CURRENT WEEK HIGHLIGHTED