

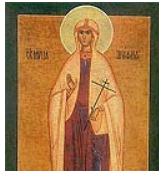
“THE PROTOMARTYR”

WEEKLY BULLETIN OF THE ORTHODOX CHURCH OF ST. STEPHEN



Sunday Feb. 5, 2012 – Sunday of the Publican & Pharisee – Tone 1
Epistle: 2 Tim. 3:10-15 Gospel: Luke 18:10-14

Martyr Agatha of Palermo in Sicily



Agatha, this glorious virgin and martyr for Christ, was born in the Sicilian town of Palermo of noble and wealthy parents. When Emperor Decius began a persecution against Christians, St. Agatha was arrested and brought to trial before Judge Quintian. The judge, seeing Agatha beautiful in countenance, desired to have her for his wife. When he

suggested this, Agatha answered that she is the bride of Christ and cannot be unfaithful to her Betrothed. Quintian subjected her to cruel tortures. Agatha was ridiculed, whipped, bound to a tree and flogged until blood flowed. After that, the judge again tried to persuade her to deny Christ and to avoid any further torture and suffering. To that the bride of Christ replied: "These tortures are very beneficial for me; just as wheat cannot arrive at the granary before it is cleansed from the chaff, so my soul cannot enter into Paradise if my body, beforehand, is not humbled by tortures." Then, the torturer ordered that her breasts be cut off and that she be cast into prison. St. Peter appeared to Agatha in prison and restored her to health and wholeness of body. Again, Agatha was led out for torture and again, cast into prison where she gave up her soul to God in the year 251 A.D. in the town of Catania during the reign of Emperor Decius. After her death, the torturer Quintian departed for Palermo to usurp her estate. However, along the way, his horse and the horses of his soldiers became wild with rage. Quintian was bitten on the face, thrown to the ground and trampled to death. Swift was the punishment of God that reached out for this savage crime perpetrated against St. Agatha.

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SERVICES & EVENTS THIS WEEK

Feb. 4, Saturday	Vigil	5:00 p.m.
Feb. 5, Sunday	Hours	9:10 a.m.
	Divine Liturgy	9:30 a.m.

Church School follows

Feb. 9, Thursday	Sort clothes at 1st Baptist	12:00 p.m.
Feb. 11, Saturday	Vigil	5:00 p.m.
Feb. 12, Sunday	Hours	9:10 a.m.
	Divine Liturgy	9:30 a.m.
	Church School follows	



to all our visitors and guests who have participated in our celebration of the Divine Liturgy this morning! While Holy Communion may only be received by prepared Orthodox Christians, our non-Orthodox guests are welcome to join us in venerating the Cross and receiving blessed bread at the conclusion of the Divine Liturgy. We invite all of our guests to join us for our Fellowship Hour and to visit our Bookstore.

REMINDERS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Super Bowl Party will be Today. We'll have hamburgers and hot dogs at coffee hour followed by a game of flag football. Then we will all get together at the Reudelhuber's to watch the game. There will be games and prizes.

Our annual parish meeting will be next Sunday. The agenda and reports have been emailed to you. If you have any questions about the reports or financial records, please give Fr. Daniel a call. The only thing missing should be the audit report. The books have been audited, and the report will be provided at the meeting.

Fr. Alexander Atty, the Dean of St. Tikhon Seminary, will be speaking at St. Raphael Orthodox Church in Inverness, FL on Saturday February 11.

James Hargrave, our missionary to Tanzania, will be worshipping with us this Sunday. He will give a presentation on his missionary work in Tanzania after Divine Liturgy.

Ephraim Project is looking for volunteers to prepare food for the homeless on Feb. 24th at 5:30p.m. Please see Anne v. d. B. or Bertina B. if you are able to help.



Ephraim Project needs toiletries to distribute to the homeless. There is a container for toiletry donations in the narthex.

Ephraim Project is sorting clothes at 1st Baptist every Thurs. 12-3 p.m. Please see Anne v. d. B. or Bertina B. if you are able to help. We are also collecting underwear for

men and women as well as men's work socks? There is a container in the narthex.

We will celebrate the 25th Anniversary of Protodeacon Michael's ordination on February 19. Bishop Mark will preside at the Liturgy that Sunday and after Liturgy there will be a catered dinner.

We are planning a mission trip to NC on July 22-28. This trip is offered through FOCUS North America. We will spend the week helping families who need it in an impoverished area of North Carolina. There will also be time for daily prayer and reflection, fellowship, and time to explore the beautiful Carolina landscape. The cost is \$250 per person plus travel expenses.

There is a sign-up sheet for hosting Coffee Hour in the fellowship hall. Please sign up and volunteer to host one Sunday.

There is a Lost & Found container in the Narthex. If you are missing anything please check it out.

PRAYER REQUESTS

Please continue to pray for Stephen, Rima, Anita, Elaine, & Stacy!

PRAYERS FOR THE HEALTH & SALVATION OF THOSE IN NEED

Monk James, Rima, George, Stacy, Margaret, Helen, Daniel, Mary Jean, Anita, Catherine, Hope, Marina, Ingrid, Elaine, Helen, Stephen.

PRAYERS FOR THE NEWLY DEPARTED: MEMORY ETERNAL!

Sue, Jim, Barbara, Cynthia, Glenn

Please let Father know if there is anyone you would like to have prayed for and added to these lists. Please use these lists in your daily prayers to remember those in need, and the faithful departed.

BIRTHDAYS FEB. 5 – FEB. 11

5th Reader Stephen Malanowski
8th Justyna Chancy
11th Michael Wozinak



ANNIVERSARIES FEB. 5 – FEB. 11

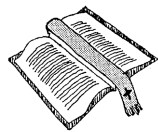
None

MAY GOD GRANT THEM MANY YEARS!

Readers for the:

Sunday of the Publican & Pharisee

SAT	Vigil Reader 1	Reader Stephen
4	Vigil Reader 2	Zora Russell
SUN	Hrs./Comm.	Patrick Wasilko
5	Epistle	Robert Kindell



Sunday of the Prodigal Son

SAT Vigil Reader 1 Reader Stephen

11	Vigil Reader 2	Gloria Malanowski
SUN	Hrs./Comm.	Patrick Wasilko
12	Epistle	Robert Kindell

Martyr Nicephorus of Antioch, in Syria – Celebrated Feb. 9



The biography of this martyr Nicephorus clearly demonstrates how God rejects pride and crowns humility and love with glory. There lived in Antioch two close friends, the learned priest Sappricius and the simple ordinary citizen Nicephorus. Somehow, their friendship turned into a terrible hatred for each other. The God-fearing Nicephorus attempted on many occasions to make peace with the priest. However, at no time did Sappricius desire to be reconciled. When the persecution of Christians began, the presbyter Sappricius was condemned to death and brought to the place of execution. The sorrowful Nicephorus followed after Sappricius beseeching him along the way to, at least, forgive him before his death that they might depart in peace. "I beseech you, O martyr of Christ," said Nicephorus, "forgive me if I have sinned against you!" Sappricius did not even want to look at his opponent but quietly and arrogantly walked toward his death. Upon seeing the hardness of the priest's heart, God did not want to accept the sacrifice of his martyrdom and to crown him with a wreath but He mysteriously withheld His grace. At the last moment, Sappricius denied Christ and declared before the executioners that he would bow down before the idols. So it is with blind hatred! Nicephorus implored Sappricius not to deny Christ saying: "O my beloved brother, do not do that; do not deny our Lord Jesus Christ; do not forfeit the heavenly wreath!" But, all was in vain. Sappricius remained adamant. Then, Nicephorus cried out to the executioners: "I, also, am a Christian; behead me in place of Sappricius!" The executioners informed the judge of this and he ordered the release of Sappricius and, in his place, beheaded Nicephorus. Nicephorus joyfully lowered his head on the block and was beheaded. Thus, he was made worthy of the kingdom and was crowned with the immortal wreath of glory. This occurred in the year 260 A.D. during the reign of Gallienus.

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Priestly-Martyr Haralambos [Charalampus] – Celebrated Feb. 10



This great saint Haralambos was a bishop in Magnesia and suffered for Christ in his one-hundred and thirteenth year. When a terrible persecution began during the reign of Emperor Septimius Severus, the Elder Haralambos did not hide from the persecutors but freely and openly preached the Faith of Christ. He endured all tortures as though he were in someone else's body. When they skinned him alive, the forgiving elder said

to the emperor's soldiers: "Thank you, my brethren, for in scraping my old body you renew my spirit for a new eternal life." He worked many miracles and converted many to the Faith. Even the emperor's daughter, Galina, abandoned the idolatry of her father and become a Christian. Condemned to death and brought to the place of execution, St. Haralambos raised his hands to heaven and prayed to God for all people that God grant them bodily health and spiritual salvation and that He multiply their fruits of the earth. "O Lord, You know that men are flesh and blood; forgive them their sins and pour out Your Grace on all!" After prayer, this holy elder gave up his soul to God before the executioner lowered the sword on his neck. He suffered in the year 202 A.D. The emperor's daughter, Galina, removed his body and honorably buried it.

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Hieromartyr Blaise the Bishop of Sebaste – Celebrated Feb. 11



Blaise was born in the Province of Cappadocia. From his early childhood, he was God-fearing and meek. Because of his great virtues, he was chosen as bishop of the city of Sebastea [in Armenia]. Blaise was a great spiritual and moral beacon in this pagan city. At the time of a grave persecution of Christians, St. Blaise encouraged his flock and visited the martyrs of Christ in prison, especially among them was the eminent and glorious Eustratius. When the city of Sebastea was completely depleted of Christians - some were slain, and others fled - the Elder Blaise withdrew to Mt. Argeos and settled there in a cave. Wild beasts recognized the holy man, gathered around him and he tenderly caressed them. But the persecutors found the saint in this remote place and brought him to trial. Along the way, Blaise cured a young boy who had a bone caught in his throat. To the plea of the poor widow whose pig had been snatched by a wolf, the saint, by the power of his prayer, commanded the wolf to return it. The sinister judges tortured Blaise severely: flogging him and scrapping him with an iron comb. By his steadfastness in the Faith of Christ, Blaise converted many pagans to the Faith. Seven women and two children languished in prison with him. The women were beheaded first and, after that, the wonderful Blaise with these two children was beheaded. He suffered and was glorified in the year 316 A.D. People pray to St. Blaise for the well being of their domestic livestock and for protection against wild beasts. However, in the west, he is also invoked for diseases of the throat.

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Reflections as we prepare for the Great Fast

As I look at my life, what is possible for me if I trust God?

How can I learn to recognize the signs God may send me?

How have I changed or grown as I take my journey of faith?

What do others see in me? Do they recognize the image and likeness of God?

How can I transform myself, my earthly canvas, into a heavenly image?

Is Christ really central to my whole life, in all I think, in all I say, in all I do?

Do I accept adversities of life according to God's will as our Blessed Mother did? or do I want only answers according to my will? Do I remember to pray to the Theotokos, who as the mother of Jesus, will intercede for me for the salvation of my soul?

Through prayer and fasting, can I forgive the offenses of others, so that my sins may be forgiven?

How am I preparing for the Bridegroom's arrival?

What are the times in my life when I can remember repenting, confessing my sins and knowing that my burdens were lifted?

How can I increase my desire to follow in the path of Jesus?

Have I set aside time each day to pray a Psalm and reflect upon its meaning to my life?

Do I make good use of the opportunities for quiet time and listen to what God may be saying to me?

Am I where I would like to be in my journey toward Christ? What concrete steps can I take to bring myself closer to where I should be on the road to salvation?

Have I pondered that by Christ's death he trampled death

Has the glorious light of the Resurrection transformed my fear of death to hope in glory?

Have I, in my prayers for departed ancestors, been thankful for the gift of faith they passed on through my family, and eventually, to me?

Is the Cross a source of healing, life and love? What areas of my life do I need to bring before the Cross for healing/transformation during the Great Fast? How do I embrace the "crosses" of my life?

In my most sinful, darkest hours, have I remembered to fall at the feet of Jesus and seek His mercy? When I have done this, has He not always generously forgiven and comforted my despairing soul?

Have I, in turn, sought to generously forgive others, even when they fail to seek my forgiveness?

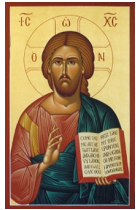
As I draw closer to remembering the day of sublime mercy when Jesus died for us even though we were still in sin, have I forgiven those who have wronged me and sought forgiveness of those I have wronged?

Do we come to the Passover mystery with the humility to accept the gift that is offered - a gift beyond our power to comprehend?

Is God's love the greatest reality in our lives?

How will our faith that we truly receive the Body and Blood of the Lord in Holy Communion change us?

Honoring or Abusing the Promise of God



During the week of February 5th we read New Testament passages that describe contrasting groups of people: those who honor God's promise of salvation, and those who abuse it for their own purposes.

Mark 13:1 warns believers to "take heed to yourselves; for they will deliver you up to councils; and you will be beaten in synagogues; and you will stand before governors and kings for my sake, to bear testimony before them."

But when they stand before hostile powers, believers should not be anxious beforehand about what to say. Instead they should "say whatever is given to you in that hour, for it is not you who speak, but the Holy Spirit." Those who do bear testimony, and preach the true Gospel, will be "hated by all for My name's sake." Yet even then there is no reason to turn away from Christ, because God's promise is that "he who endures to the end will be saved." Honoring that promise will lead to the Kingdom, even though the road is rough.

II Peter 2 and 3 describe those who abuse rather than honor God's promise. In the previous chapter, Peter has reiterated the assurance that the Holy Spirit inspires those who preach the Gospel in the right way: "...no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, because no prophecy ever came by the impulse of man, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God."

But he goes on to warn that just as false prophets put forth their destructive teachings in earlier days, "there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing upon themselves swift destruction. And many will follow their licentiousness, and because of them the way of truth will be reviled."

Peter says that these false teachers have "hearts trained in greed." They are exploiters of others who "despise authority." They are scoffers who cynically ask, "Where is the promise of His coming?" So rather than honor

the promise, they abuse it by their ridicule, encouraging others to doubt it. They "entice unsteady souls" to revere them instead of Christ.

What motivates these scoffers? Peter answers when he writes about their greedy hearts and their attitude toward authority. Christians must place God at the center of their lives. They can't be greedy for notoriety, trying to gather personal followers. They can't despise authority, because God asks His people to submit freely to His loving authority. For people greedy for acclaim and who despise authority, submission to God is impossible. It's equally impossible for them to believe God's promise, and honor it.

Peter warns us against these people who he says are like "waterless springs." He acknowledges that some things are hard to understand, including Paul's teaching. But knowing this, and knowing that some people will twist the teachings, we can leave their wrong ideas aside and concentrate on growing in the "grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."

This weekly bulletin insert complements the curriculum published by the Department of Christian Education of the Orthodox Church in America. This and many other Christian Education resources are available at <http://dce.oca>.



Please contact Fr. Daniel Hickman for all pastoral issues, hospital visits, emergencies, etc. Please keep him abreast of any issues that come up.

GENERAL INFORMATION

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