

You came into the world to save sinners; therefore You came to save Me also? You came to find and to save him who was lost; therefore You came to seek me too, for I am one of the lost. O Lord, O my God and Creator! I should have come to You as a transgressor of Your law. I should have fallen at Your feet, cast myself down before You, humbly begging forgiveness, pleading with You and craving Your mercy. But You Yourself have come to me, wretched and good-for-nothing servant that I am; my Lord has come to me, His enemy and apostate; my Master has come and has bestowed his love of mankind upon me. Listen my soul: God has come to us.

Saint Tikhon of Zadonsk



**13 December 2015 is the  
Eleventh Sunday of Luke**

**Matins Gospel:** Luke 24:36-53

**Epistle:** Colossians 3:4-11

**Gospel:** Luke 14:16-24

**Resurrectional Apolytikion:**

Let the Heavens rejoice; let earthly things be glad; for the Lord hath wrought might with His arm, He hath trampled upon death by death. The first-born of the dead hath He become. From the belly of Hades hath He delivered us, and hath granted great mercy to the world.

**Seasonal Kontakion:**

On this day the Virgin cometh to the cave to give birth to God the Word ineffably, Who was before all the ages. Dance for joy, O earth, on hearing the gladsome tidings; with the Angels and the shepherds now glorify Him Who is willing to be gazed on as a young Child Who before the ages is God.

### ***Readings and saints for this week:***

**Monday:** Hebrews 3:5-11, 17-19; Mark 8:11-21  
Martyrs Thyrsus & companions

**Tuesday:** 2 Timothy 1:8-18; Mark 2:23-28; 3:1-5  
The Holy Hieromartyr Eleutherius; Susannah the Deaconess

**Wednesday:** Hebrews 5:11-14; 6:1-8; Mark 8:30-34  
Prophet Haggai; Modestos, Bp. of Jerusalem

**Thursday:** Hebrews 11:33-40; 12:1-2; Mark 9:10-15  
Prophet Daniel; Dionysios of Zakynthos

**Friday:** Hebrews 7:18-25; Mark 9:33-41  
Martyrs Sebastian & Companions; Michael the Confessor

**Saturday:** Galatians 3:8-12; Luke 13:19-29  
Saturday before Nativity; Martyrs Boniface & Companions; Gregentius of Ethiopia



# ***Evangelion***

*A Bulletin of Orthodox Christian Faith*

13 December 2015

## **Come to the Feast**

Today we hear Saint Luke's account of the parable of the great banquet. Jesus Christ recounts how a man gave a great feast to which many people were invited. However, they did not respond to His invitation, excusing themselves for a variety of reasons. In response, the master of the house instructed his servants to go out into the streets and assemble the poor and crippled to take their place.

The Scriptures use the image of a banquet as a symbol of the Kingdom of God, and the Church Fathers understood this parable as referring to the coming of Christ in the flesh, which we are preparing to celebrate this Nativity. By the marriage of Christ's human and divine natures we have been given access to His divine life. For centuries God had been preparing the people of Israel to receive Christ, but, when the Jews rejected Jesus, the Gospel was to be preached to the Gentiles and all were given the chance to respond to Jesus Christ.



However, this parable is also a warning to us in our complacency. The people who failed to respond to the invitation to the banquet were not bad people, nor were they doing bad things. Their excuses for not attending the feast can sound quite legitimate. We need to be careful that the normal cares of life do not so overwhelm us that they prevent us from seeing what is really going on. For the ultimate tragedy in this account is not simply that people rejected God's revelation, but that they failed to see what it was that they were rejecting. As we await the coming of Christ we need to be vigilant that the cares of life do not overwhelm us and that we may be given the gift of sight to recognize Christ at the many moments that He comes into our lives.

Oh, brothers and sisters, what a banquet that is! How great is the harmony and joy of those who eat at this heavenly table! They enjoy food that produces everlasting life.

Saint Athanasius the Great

When your faith in the Lord, either during your life and prosperity, or in the time of sickness and at the moment of quitting this life, grows weak, grows dim from worldly vanity or through illness, and from the terrors and darkness of death, then look with the mental eyes of your heart upon the companies of our forefathers, the patriarchs, prophets, and righteous ones:

Saint Simeon, who took the Lord up in his arms, Job, Anna the Prophetess, and others; the Apostles, prelates, venerable Fathers, martyrs, the disinterested, the righteous, and all the saints.

See how, both during their earthly life and at the time of their departure from this life, they unceasingly looked to God and died in the hope of the resurrection and of the life eternal, and strive to imitate them.

These living examples, which are so numerous, are capable to strengthen the wavering faith of every Christian in the Lord and in the future life.

Those Christian communions who do not venerate the saints and do not call upon them in prayer lose much in piety and in Christian hope. They deprive themselves of the great strengthening of their faith by the examples of men like unto themselves.

Saint John of Kronstadt



### ***The Prophet Daniel and the Three Holy Youths***

On Thursday we commemorate the Prophet Daniel and the Three Holy Youths who refused to worship the idol of King Nebuchadnezzar in Babylon and instead insisted on the worship of the one true God. Their steadfastness in faith can be seen in the hymn that they sang in praise of God, which has become part of the basis of Matins. Moreover, the account of these youths being thrown into a burning furnace and not being burnt, but instead encountering the Angel of God, is understood by the Church as prefiguring the Holy Virgin's Conception of Christ, the Living Flame, without being burnt. In the words of the Eighth Ode of the Katavasias of the Nativity:

***The furnace moist with dew was the image and figure of a wonder beyond nature. For it burnt not the children whom it had received, even as the fire of the Godhead consumed not the Virgin's womb into which it had descended. Therefore let us sing in praise: Let all creation bless the Lord and exalt Him above all throughout the ages.***

## **The Forefathers of Christ According to the Flesh**

Today, on the second Sunday before Christmas, the Church commemorates Christ's forefathers according to the flesh, those righteous men and women who lived under the Old covenant, and foretold and longed for the coming of the Saviour. This includes those who lived before the giving of the Law, notably the patriarch Abraham, as well as the many prophets and righteous ones who witnessed to God's revelation to the people of Israel and called His people to return to Him when they strayed into error.



The Church understands the events that are recounted in the Old Testament as one long preparation for the coming of Jesus Christ. In the Old Testament we see how God was preparing a people who would be able to receive His Son, and the birth of the Holy Theotokos is the final moment of this long work of preparation.

The Church also insists that we need to read the Old Testament with the eyes of faith, a faith informed by the coming of Jesus Christ. Seen in this way, the Old Testament books are not simply about a series of historical events, or even the development of early Judaism. Rather, they foretell the coming of Christ in various different ways. Everything points to Him and should be interpreted in the light of Him.

You justified the forefathers in faith, and through them betrothed yourself, aforetime, to the Church taken from out of the Gentiles. The saints boast in glory. For from their seed, there exists a noble crop, who is she who without seed has given You birth. By their intercessions, O Christ our God, save our souls.

Apolytikion of the Holy Forefathers

The Redeemer of the human race willed to arrange a new birth and re-creation of mankind: just as the first creation, taking dust from the virginal and pure earth, where He formed the first Adam, so also now, having arranged His Incarnation upon the earth, and so to speak, in place of dust He chooses out of all the creation this pure and immaculate Virgin and, having re-created mankind in His chosen one from among mankind, the creator of Adam is made the New Adam, in order to save the old.

Saint Andrew of Crete