



# SAINT MARY OF EGYPT ORTHODOX CHURCH IN AMERICA

**Newsletter –MARCH 2011**

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Lenten Prayer of St.

Ephraim the Syrian

*O Lord and Master of my life!*

*Take from me the spirit of sloth,  
faint-heartedness, lust of power,  
and idle talk. But give rather the*

*spirit of chastity, humility,*

*patience, and love to Thy servant.*

*Yea, O Lord and King! Grant me to*

*see my own errors and not to*

*judge my brother; For Thou art*

*blessed unto ages of ages. Amen*

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## PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION ARE NEEDED FOR:

The Orthodox Church in America  
Our Holy Synod; Metropolitan Jonah; Archbishop Dmitri,  
Bishop Mark  
Archbishop Seraphim  
Metropolitan Theodosius; Metropolitan Herman,  
Bishop Nikon  
Archpriest Peter, Matushka Anastasia  
Hieromonk Cyprian  
Priest Thomas; Matushka Angela  
Archpriest Dmitri; Matushka Maryanne  
Deacon Lazarus  
Our catechumens: Charles; Cameron; Kim  
Demetrios, Tamara, Maura Faith, Caroline Hope and  
Thomas Reilly Pridmore; Gayle Brown  
Nicholas, Maryanne, Isaiah, Sophia and the newly  
illuminated Genevieve Noelle  
Cristian, Alexandra, Andrea Nicole, and the newly born  
Lucas Anthony  
James, Michaela, Rachael and the newly born child  
David, Elizabeth and the child to be born of her, and David  
Babylos, Tatyana and the child to be born of her, and  
Natalia  
Dawn and Mike Bloechl in Anchorage and their 4 year old  
daughter Ellie battling leukemia  
Deacon Kevin, Kamilla Joy, Justin Peter, Abigail Marie,  
Symeon Basil and Miranda Rose Smith  
Lottie Sivulich; Dena Smith; Gordon and June Smith, Mary  
Kowalski (Fr. Peter & Mother Terri's families)  
Mary, Janice Douglass' mother  
Phyllis and Paul Skiba  
Robert and Xenia Peterson  
Elaine Calugar and family, Carole;  
Anna, Victor; Tanya and family - especially Veronica;  
Sasha, Natalie and their family;  
Ed, Allan; Pauline;  
Todd, Mathew, Maggie and Kimber; Scott;  
Steve and Earlene Nesselrote (Tracey Bonaker's parents)  
Nicodemus and Elizabeth  
All Seminary students from the Diocese of the South;  
All Missions and Mission Stations in the Diocese of the  
South;  
All those who have suffered and/or are suffering at the  
hands of others;  
All those who suffer alone without friends or family  
All those who are suffering in the violence in the Middle  
East



## The Lenten Prayer of St Ephraim the Syrian

By Protopresbyter Alexander Schmemmann

Of all Lenten hymns and prayers, one short prayer can be termed the Lenten prayer. Tradition ascribes it to one of the great teachers of spiritual life - St. Ephraim the Syrian. Here is its text:

***O Lord and Master of my life! Take from me the spirit of sloth, faint-heartedness, lust of power, and idle talk. But give rather the spirit of chastity, humility, patience, and love to Thy servant. Yea, O Lord and King! Grant me to see my own errors and not to judge my brother; For Thou art blessed unto ages of ages. Amen***

This prayer is read twice at the end of each Lenten service Monday through Friday (not on Saturdays and Sundays for, as we shall see later, the services of these days do not follow the Lenten pattern). At the first reading, a prostration follows each petition. Then we all bow twelve times saying: "O God, cleanse me a sinner." The entire prayer is repeated with one final prostration at the end.

Why does this short and simple prayer occupy such an important position in the entire Lenten worship? Because it enumerates in a unique way all the "negative" and "positive" elements of repentance and constitutes, so to speak, a "check list" for our individual Lenten effort. This effort is aimed first at our liberation from some fundamental spiritual diseases which shape our life and make it virtually impossible for us even to start turning ourselves to God.

The basic disease is sloth. It is that strange laziness and passivity of our entire being which always pushes us "down" rather than "up" -- which constantly convinces us that no change is possible and therefore desirable. It is in fact a deeply rooted cynicism which to every spiritual challenge responds "what for?" and makes our life one tremendous spiritual waste. It is the root of all sin because it poisons the spiritual energy at its very source.

The result of sloth is faint-heartedness. It is the state of despondency which all spiritual Fathers considered the greatest danger for the soul. Despondency is the impossibility for man to see anything good or positive; it is the reduction of everything to negativism and pessimism. It is truly a demonic power in us because the Devil is fundamentally a liar. He lies to man about God and about the world; he fills life with darkness and negation. Despondency is the suicide of the soul because when man

is possessed by it he is absolutely unable to see the light and to desire it.

Lust of power! Strange as it may seem, it is precisely sloth and despondency that fill our life with lust of power. By vitiating the entire attitude toward life and making it meaningless and empty, they force us to seek compensation in, a radically wrong attitude toward other persons. If my life is not oriented toward God, not aimed at eternal values, it will inevitably become selfish and self-centered and this means that all other beings will become means of my own self-satisfaction. If God is not the Lord and Master of my life, then I become my own lord and master -- the absolute center of my own world, and I begin to evaluate everything in terms of my needs, my ideas, my desires, and my judgments. The lust of power is thus a fundamental depravity in my relationship to other beings, a search for their subordination to me. It is not necessarily expressed in the actual urge to command and to dominate "others." It may result as well in indifference, contempt, lack of interest, consideration, and respect. It is indeed sloth and despondency directed this time at others; it completes spiritual suicide with spiritual murder.

Finally, idle talk. Of all created beings, man alone has been endowed with the gift of speech. All Fathers see in it the very "seal" of the Divine Image in man because God Himself is revealed as Word (John, 1:1). But being the supreme gift, it is by the same token the supreme danger. Being the very expression of man, the means of his self-fulfillment, it is for this very reason the means of his fall and self-destruction, of betrayal and sin. The word saves and the word kills; the word inspires and the word poisons. The word is the means of Truth and it is the means of demonic Lie. Having an ultimate positive power, it has therefore a tremendous negative power. It truly creates positively or negatively. When deviated from its divine origin and purpose, the word becomes idle. It "enforces" sloth, despondency, and lust of power, and transforms life into hell. It becomes the very power of sin.

These four are thus the negative "objects" of repentance. They are the obstacles to be removed. But God alone can remove them. Hence, the first part of the Lenten prayer; this cry from the bottom of human helplessness. Then the prayer moves to the positive aims of repentance which also are four.

Chastity! If one does not reduce this term, as is so often and erroneously done, only to its sexual connotations, it is understood as the positive counterpart of sloth. The exact and full translation of the Greek

sofrosini and the Russian tselomudryie ought to be whole-mindedness. Sloth is, first of all, dissipation, the brokenness of our vision and energy, the inability to see the whole. Its opposite then is precisely wholeness. If we usually mean by chastity the virtue opposed to sexual depravity, it is because the broken character of our existence is nowhere better manifested than in sexual lust -- the alienation of the body from the life and control of the spirit. Christ restores wholeness in us and He does so by restoring in us the true scale of values by leading us back to God.

The first and wonderful fruit of this wholeness or chastity is humility. We already spoke of it. It is above everything else the victory of truth in us, the elimination of all lies in which we usually live. Humility alone is capable of truth, of seeing and accepting things as they are and therefore of seeing God's majesty and goodness and love in everything. This is why we are told that God gives grace to the humble and resists the proud.

Chastity and humility are naturally followed by patience. The "natural" or "fallen" man is impatient, for being blind to himself he is quick to judge and to condemn others. Having but a broken, incomplete, and distorted knowledge of everything, he measures all things by his tastes and his ideas. Being indifferent to everyone except himself, he wants life to be successful right here and now. Patience, however, is truly a divine virtue. God is patient not because He is "indulgent," but because He sees the depth of all that exists, because the inner reality of things, which in our blindness we do not see, is open to Him. The closer we come to God, the more patient we grow and the more we reflect that infinite respect for all beings which is the proper quality of God.

Finally, the crown and fruit of all virtues, of all growth and effort, is love -- that love which, as we have already said, can be given by God alone--the gift which is the goal of all spiritual preparation and practice.

All this is summarized and brought together in the concluding petition of the Lenten prayer in which we ask "to see my own errors and not to judge my brother." For ultimately there is but one danger: pride. Pride is the source of evil, and all evil is pride. Yet it is not enough for me to see my own errors, for even this apparent virtue can be turned into pride. Spiritual writings are full of warnings against the subtle forms of pseudo-piety which, in reality, under the cover of humility and self-accusation can lead to a truly demonic pride. But when we "see our own errors" and "do not judge our brothers," when, in other terms,

chastity, humility, patience, and love are but one in us, then and only then the ultimate enemy--pride--will be destroyed in us.

After each petition of the prayer we make a prostration. Prostrations are not limited to the Prayer of St. Ephraim but constitute one of the distinctive characteristics of the entire Lenten worship. Here, however, their meaning is disclosed best of all. In the long and difficult effort of spiritual recovery, the Church does not separate the soul from the body. The whole man has fallen away from God; the whole man is to be restored, the whole man is to return. The catastrophe of sin lies precisely in the victory of the flesh -- the animal, the irrational, the lust in us -- over the spiritual and the divine. But the body is glorious; the body is holy, so holy that God Himself "became flesh." Salvation and repentance then are not contempt for the body or neglect of it, but restoration of the body to its real function as the expression and the life of spirit, as the temple of the priceless human soul. Christian asceticism is a fight, not against but for the body. For this reason, the whole man - soul and body - repents. The body participates in the prayer of the soul just as the soul prays through and in the body. Prostrations, the "psycho-somatic" sign of repentance and humility, of adoration and obedience, are thus the Lenten rite par excellence.



***Open to me the doors of repentance, O Life-giver, for my spirit rises early to pray towards Thy holy temple, Bearing the temple of my body all defiled. But in your compassion purify me by the loving-kindness of Your mercy***

***Lead me on the paths of salvation, O Mother of God, for I have profaned my soul with shameful sins and have wasted my life in laziness. But by your intercessions deliver me from all impurity***

***When I think of the many evil things I have done, wretch that I am, I tremble at the fearful day of judgment; but trusting in Thy loving-kindness, like David I cry out to Thee: Have mercy on me, O God, according to Thy Great Mercy***



## **Forgiveness Sunday**

**– By Protopresbyter Alexander Schmemmann**

In the Orthodox Church, the last Sunday before Great Lent – the day on which, at Vespers, Lent is liturgically announced and inaugurated – is called Forgiveness Sunday. On the morning of that Sunday, at the Divine Liturgy, we hear the words of Christ:

*"If you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, but if you forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses..." (Mark 6:14-15)*

Then after Vespers – after hearing the announcement of Lent in the Great Prokeimenon: "Turn not away Thy face from Thy child for I am afflicted! Hear me speedily! Draw near unto my soul and deliver it!", after making our entrance into Lenten worship, with its special memories, with the prayer of St. Ephraim the Syrian, with its prostrations – we ask forgiveness from each other, we perform the rite of forgiveness and reconciliation. And as we approach each other with words of reconciliation, the choir intones the Paschal hymns, filling the church with the anticipation of Paschal joy.

What is the meaning of this rite? Why is it that the Church wants us to begin Lenten season with forgiveness and reconciliation? These questions are in order because for too many people Lent means primarily, and almost exclusively, a change of diet, the compliance with ecclesiastical regulations concerning fasting. They understand fasting as an end in itself, as a "good deed" required by God and carrying in itself its merit and its reward. But, the Church spares no effort in revealing to us that fasting is but a means, one among many, towards a higher goal: the spiritual renewal of man, his return to God, true repentance and, therefore, true reconciliation. The Church spares no effort in warning us against a hypocritical and pharisaic fasting, against the reduction of religion to mere external obligations. As a Lenten hymn says:

*In vain do you rejoice in no eating, O soul!  
For you abstain from food,  
But from passions you are not purified.  
If you persevere in sin, you will perform a useless fast.*

Now, forgiveness stands at the very center of Christian faith and of Christian life because Christianity itself is, above all, the religion of forgiveness. God forgives us, and His forgiveness is in Christ, His Son, Whom He sends to us,

so that by sharing in His humanity we may share in His love and be truly reconciled with God. Indeed, Christianity has no other content but love. And it is primarily the renewal of that love, a return to it, a growth in it, that we seek in Great Lent, in fasting and prayer, in the entire spirit and the entire effort of that season. Thus, truly forgiveness is both the beginning of, and the proper condition for the Lenten season.

One may ask, however: Why should I perform this rite when I have no "enemies"? Why should I ask forgiveness from people who have done nothing to me, and whom I hardly know? To ask these questions, is to misunderstand

### **Great Canon of St. Andrew of Crete**

From Monachos.net

The Great Canon of St Andrew is read each year as part of the ascetic labour of the Great Fast (Lent). Divided into four portions, these are read during the services of Great Compline on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday evenings of the First Week ('Pure/Clean Week') of the Fast. The whole Canon is then read in its entirety on Thursday of the Fifth Week (actually read 'in anticipation' on Wednesday evening).

The Great Canon is one of the great works, if not the great work, of the Church's hymnography of repentance. It is steeped in biblical imagery, yet it is not simply a condensation of biblical themes. In the Canon, all the human events of scripture—creation, fall, exile, return, longing, redemption—all are made personal. They become my events: my creation, my fall, my redemption. Their story is my story, and I am made intensely aware of all its depth. The Canon begins:

'Where shall I begin to weep over the cursed deeds of my life?

What foundation shall I lay, O Christ, for this lamentation?'

The Canon thus brings each of us into the story of scripture; stirs us with moving imagery to realize the depths of our sin. We begin to see our exile, our distance from Christ; and from that distance, we begin to repent.

the Orthodox teaching concerning forgiveness. It is true, that open enmity, personal hatred, real animosity may be absent from our life, though if we experience them, it may be easier for us to repent, for these feelings openly contradict Divine commandments. But, the Church reveals to us that there are much subtler ways of offending Divine Love. These are indifference, selfishness, lack of interest in other people, of any real concern for them -- in short, that wall which we usually erect around ourselves, thinking that by being "polite" and "friendly" we fulfill God's commandments. The rite of forgiveness is so important precisely because it makes us realize -- be it only for one minute -- that our entire relationship to other men is wrong, makes us experience that encounter of one child of God with another, of one person created by God with another, makes us feel that mutual "recognition" which is so terribly lacking in our cold and dehumanized world.

On that unique evening, listening to the joyful Paschal hymns we are called to make a spiritual discovery: to taste of another mode of life and relationship with people, of life whose essence is love. We can discover that always and everywhere Christ, the Divine Love Himself, stands in the midst of us, transforming our mutual alienation into brotherhood. As I advance towards the other, as the other comes to me -- we begin to realize that it is Christ Who brings us together by His love for both of us.

And because we make this discovery -- and because this discovery is that of the Kingdom of God itself: the Kingdom of Peace and Love, of reconciliation with God and, in Him, with all that exists -- we hear the hymns of that Feast, which once a year, "opens to us the doors of Paradise." We know why we shall fast and pray, what we shall seek during the long Lenten pilgrimage. Forgiveness Sunday: the day on which we acquire the power to make our fasting -- true fasting; our effort -- true effort; our reconciliation with God -- true reconciliation.

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### **THE ANNUNCIATION OF THE MOST HOLY THEOTOKOS -- March 25**

The Feast of the Annunciation is one of the earliest Christian feasts, and was already being celebrated in the fourth century. There is a painting of the Annunciation in the catacomb of Priscilla in Rome dating from the second century. The Council of Toledo in 656 mentions the Feast, and the Council in Trullo in 692 says that the Annunciation was celebrated during Great Lent.

The Greek and Slavonic names for the Feast may be translated as "good tidings." This, of course, refers to the Incarnation of the Son of God and the salvation He brings. The background of the Annunciation is found in the Gospel of St Luke (1:26-38). The troparion describes this as the "beginning of our salvation, and the revelation of the eternal mystery," for on this day the Son of God became the Son of Man.

There are two main components to the Annunciation: the message itself, and the response of the Virgin. The message fulfills God's promise to send a Redeemer (Genesis 3:15): "I will put enmity between you and the woman, between your seed and her seed; he shall crush your head, and you shall lie in wait for his heel." The Fathers of the Church understand "her seed" to refer to Christ. The prophets hinted at His coming, which they saw dimly, but the Archangel Gabriel now proclaims that the promise is about to be fulfilled.

We see this echoed in the Liturgy of St Basil, as well: "When man disobeyed Thee, the only true God who had created him, and was deceived by the guile of the serpent, becoming subject to death by his own transgressions, Thou, O God, in Thy righteous judgment, didst send him forth from Paradise into this world, returning him to the earth from which he was taken, yet providing for him the salvation of regeneration in Thy Christ Himself."

The Archangel Gabriel was sent by God to Nazareth in Galilee. There he spoke to the undefiled Virgin who was betrothed to St Joseph: "Hail, thou who art highly favored, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women. And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Most High: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end."

In contrast to Eve, who was readily deceived by the serpent, the Virgin did not immediately accept the Angel's message. In her humility, she did not think she was deserving of such words, but was actually troubled by them. The fact that she asked for an explanation reveals her sobriety and prudence. She did not disbelieve the words of the angel, but could not understand how they would be fulfilled, for they spoke of something which was beyond nature.

Then said Mary unto the angel, How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?" (Luke 1:34).

"And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee: therefore also that which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God. And, behold, thy cousin Elisabeth hath also conceived a son in her old age: and this is the sixth month with her, who was called barren. For with God nothing shall be impossible.' And Mary said, 'Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word.' And the angel departed from her" (Luke 1: 35-38)."

In his Sermon 23 on the day of the Annunciation, St Philaret of Moscow boldly stated that "the word of the creature brought the Creator down into the world." He explains that salvation is not merely an act of God's will, but also involves the Virgin's free will. She could have refused, but she accepted God's will and chose to cooperate without complaint or further questions.

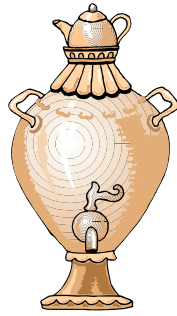
The icon of the Feast shows the Archangel with a staff in his left hand, indicating his role as a messenger. Sometimes one wing is upraised, as if to show his swift descent from heaven. His right hand is stretched toward the holy Virgin as he delivers his message.

The Virgin is depicted either standing or sitting, usually holding yarn in her left hand. Sometimes she is shown holding a scroll. Her right hand may be raised to indicate her surprise at the message she is hearing. Her head is bowed, showing her consent and obedience. The descent of the Holy Spirit upon her is depicted by a ray of light issuing from a small sphere at the top of the icon, which symbolizes heaven. In a famous icon from Sinai, a white dove is shown in the ray of light.

The Annunciation falls during Lent, but it is always celebrated with great joy. The Liturgy of St Basil or St John Chrysostom is served, even on the weekdays of Lent. It is one of the two days of Great Lent on which the fast is relaxed and fish is permitted (Palm Sunday is the other).



**Dear Baba, can you explain when we should and should not be lighting candles? I know you've talked about not moving at all during the Anaphora but honestly I'm not sure when that is. Can you give me some simple rules to follow?**



My dear, I would be happy to do that. Come sit down and let's have a cup of tea and a nice chat.

Here is a very quick rule to go by: If you have come to church after the reading of the Holy Gospel and the sermon, the opportunities to light candles and reverence icons appropriately have virtually vanished. There are multiple litanies immediately after the sermon when it is really your last chance. Anything past that and it is almost guaranteed that you would be going up to light candles and venerate icons at a completely disruptive and inappropriate time.

If you have arrived this late, please wait until after the liturgy to move about the church to light candles and reverence the icons. The candles will be extinguished when everyone has left the church temple for safety reasons, but I promise they will be relit at the next service and allowed to burn fully. And I know you'll be mindful to not try to light candles during the entrances, when the deacon is censuring the church or during the sermon.

We light candles as we come into the church as a tangible way of offering our prayers for the things that are sitting on our hearts, putting ourselves physically into the presence of God and greeting the invisible cloud of witnesses with whom we are worshipping. This should happen ideally before the service starts so that we've had a chance to prepare ourselves to participate more fully once the Liturgy or other service begins. This movement through the Church temple is the transition from the world to God's time and place. It is very important but it has its appropriate time and a time when it becomes disruptive. Let me explain why.

The liturgy is the work of the people and isn't just a nice backdrop for our personal prayers. As you know, there are different types of prayer offered at different times. The liturgy is the time for all of us as the Bride of Christ to offer ourselves wholly and fully to Him corporately. We are not to use chothki or prayer ropes during liturgy for that very reason – it is simply not the time for our personal prayers but the special time set aside for corporate worship in preparation to approach the chalice. We may never be

truly worthy to approach the chalice but we should never be unprepared.

We have been called to a great banquet and we need to come prepared and at the appointed time. Imagine being invited to a special dinner at a friend's house and arriving late. You find them already deep in conversation and well into the beautiful meal prepared for them. Each of us would strive to be as non-disruptive as possible wouldn't we? The only thing more painful to the host would be if we didn't show up at all. And so it is with Christ who offers us the life-giving blessing to commune with Him.

I know you are mindful of this and those who do arrive so late do usually refrain from approaching the chalice, which is indeed appropriate. I just hope and pray you won't make arriving late and either foregoing communion or popping in the line unprepared your standard.

While you may appropriately abstain from receiving communion because of your very late arrival, your movement through the church temple to just light a few candles can be extremely disruptive to those who are preparing themselves to approach the chalice. This is especially true as we enter the second half of the Liturgy.

And at times it is simply wrong to be moving about at all. During the great miracle of the consecration (during the Anaphora you mention in your question) when the Holy Spirit actually descends and makes our offering of bread and wine into the very Body and Blood of Our Lord, we should be scarcely breathing and absolutely still and quiet. And yet we can easily create a circus atmosphere of inattentiveness with people lighting candles, greeting one another, moving about, etc. You can see how that now extends beyond being disruptive to fellow worshippers to being stunningly disrespectful.

As we've talked about in previous chats, ask yourself what time you need to leave your home to be at church ten minutes before the liturgy starts. Then I promise you there will be plenty of time to



appropriately move about the church reverently lighting candles.

And please don't let lighting candles take the place of preparing for and approaching the chalice to commune with Our Lord and Savior. Seriously consider answering the invitation to come to the banquet and prepare yourself to fully participate in the Liturgy and receive communion by confession, fasting, making peace with your neighbor and arriving on time for the Liturgy.

With enveloping hugs;

Baba

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### **40 Martyrs of Sebaste Commemorated March 9**

In the year 313 St Constantine the Great issued an edict granting Christians religious freedom, and officially recognizing Christianity as equal with paganism under the law. But his co-ruler Licinius was a pagan, and he decided to stamp out Christianity in his part of the Empire. As Licinius prepared his army to fight Constantine, he decided to remove Christians from his army, fearing mutiny.

One of the military commanders of that time in the Armenian city of Sebaste was Agricola, a zealous champion of idolatry. Under his command was a company of forty Cappadocians, brave soldiers who had distinguished themselves in many battles. When these Christian soldiers refused to offer sacrifice to the pagan gods, Agricola locked them up in prison. The soldiers occupied themselves with prayer and psalmody, and during the night they heard a voice saying, "Persevere until the end, then you shall be saved."

On the following morning, the soldiers were again taken to Agricola. This time the pagan tried flattery. He began to praise their valor, their youth and strength, and once more he urged them to renounce Christ and thereby win themselves the respect and favor of their emperor.

Seven days later, the renowned judge Licius arrived at Sebaste and put the soldiers on trial. The saints steadfastly answered, "Take not only our military insignia, but also our lives, since nothing is more precious to us than Christ God." Licius then ordered

his servants to stone the holy martyrs. But the stones missed the saints and returned to strike those who had thrown them. One stone thrown by Licius hit Agricola in the face, smashing his teeth. The torturers realized that the saints were guarded by some invisible power. In prison, the soldiers spent the night in prayer and again they heard the voice of the Lord comforting them: "He who believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live (John 11:25). Be brave and fear not, for you shall obtain imperishable crowns."

On the following day the judge repeated the interrogation in front of the torturer, but the soldiers remained unyielding.

It was winter, and there was a severe frost. They lined up the holy soldiers, threw them into a lake near the city, and set a guard to prevent them from coming out of the water. In order to break the will of the martyrs, a warm bath-house was set up on the shore. During the first hour of the night, when the cold had become unbearable, one of the soldiers made a dash for the bath-house, but no sooner had he stepped over the threshold, than he fell down dead.

During the third hour of the night, the Lord sent consolation to the martyrs. Suddenly there was light, the ice melted away, and the water in the lake became warm. All the guards were asleep, except for Aglaius, who was keeping watch. Looking at the lake he saw that a radiant crown had appeared over the head of each martyr. Aglaius counted thirty-nine crowns and realized that the soldier who fled had lost his crown.

Aggias then woke up the other guards, took off his uniform and said to them, "I too am a Christian," and he joined the martyrs. Standing in the water he prayed, "Lord God, I believe in You, in Whom these soldiers believe. Add me to their number, and make me worthy to suffer with Your servants." Then a fortieth crown appeared over his head.

In the morning, the torturers saw with surprise that the martyrs were still alive, and their guard Aggias was glorifying Christ together with them. They led the soldiers out of the water and broke their legs. During this horrible execution the mother of the youngest of the soldiers, Meliton, pleaded with her son not to persevere until death.

They put the bodies of the martyrs on a cart and committed them to fire. Young Meliton was still breathing, and they left him to lay on the ground. His



mother then picked up her son, and on her own shoulders she carried him behind the cart. When Meliton drew his last breath, his mother put him on the cart with the bodies of his fellow sufferers. The bodies of the saints were tossed in the fire, and their charred bones were thrown into the water, so that Christians would not gather them up.

Three days later the martyrs appeared in a dream to St Peter, Bishop of Sebaste, and commanded him to bury their remains. The bishop together with several clergy gathered up the relics of the glorious martyrs by night and buried them with honor.

Holy Forty Martyrs Pray to God for Us!



### **Planned Giving Seminar March 13 and 20 at 1:00 at St. Mary of Egypt**

You are invited to an attended a one-hour seminar on how life insurance can be an important and meaningful method of giving to the church. Agents from the Prudential Insurance Company will review with you the different forms of donations of life insurance.

**Brief Description:** The "Gift of Life" donations are a simple means for parishioners to contribute significant amounts of money to the church through life insurance.

This is a straight forward program by which parishioners take out life insurance policies with the church as the beneficiary. The participating parishioners need to be insurable from a health perspective and regular contributors to the church.

The life insurance policies are usually terms policies, **with a minimum face amount of \$100,000, but in many cases for considerably higher amounts and are available for eligible parishioners up to the age 75.**

Because of the investment value of the premiums, usually the premiums paid are a fraction of the face amount of the policy.

There are two options to this program:

**Non-Tax Deductible:** This approach is that parishioners take out life insurance policies with the church as the beneficiaries and **the parishioners make the premium payments directly to the insurance company** on a monthly, quarterly, semi-annually, annual basis or as a single premium or 7 year premium payment plan.

**Tax Deductible:** If the parishioners desire tax deductions, then the church make the premium payments directly to insurance company and the parishioners contribute like amounts to the church. **These policies are usually a single premium or 7 year premium payment plans. You need to check with you tax advisor for tax advice.**

For more information please contact Reader Thomas Hobbs.

### ***Sunday School News***

*Preschool through 3<sup>rd</sup> grade meet immediately after communion and the older kids meet as soon as they have gotten their food at coffee hour. All youth through high school are most welcome to attend class.*

- *Children will participate in the icon procession on the Sunday of Orthodoxy on March 13. Please bring icons from home. Younger grades will not have class after the procession.*
- *Younger grades will also not meet on the Sunday of Holy Cross on March 27 so they can participate in the veneration of the cross at the end of the Divine Liturgy*
- *Great Lent units will include a study of confession. All children from age 6-7 and up should be making confession a normal part of their spiritual lives. We hope to make it a little less daunting through our study.*

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
27 <b>MEATFARE SUNDAY</b> 9am - Choir 9:40am - Hours 10am - Divine Liturgy	28 9:30am - Various	1 9:30am - Akathist 7pm - Catechumen Inquirer's Class at Starbucks	2 Heritage Healthcare 7pm - Daily Vespers	3 7:40am - Hours 8am - Divine Liturgy	4 9:30am - Various 7pm - Vespers	5 9:40am - Hours 10am - Divine Liturgy 4pm - Confessions 5pm - Vigil
6 <b>CHEESEFARE FORGIVENESS</b> 9am - Choir 9:40am - Hours 10am - Divine Liturgy 12:30pm - Forgiveness Vespers	7 9:30am - Various 7pm - GREAT CANON	8 9:30am - Akathist 7pm - GREAT CANON	9 7pm - Presanctified 9pm - GREAT CANON	10 8am - Matins 7pm - GREAT CANON	11 9:30am - Various 7pm - Presanctified	12 9:40am - Hours 10am - Divine Liturgy 4pm - Confessions 5pm - Vigil
13 <b>SUNDAY OF ORTHODOXY</b> 9am - Choir 9:40am - Hours 10am - Divine 6pm - Pan-Orthodox Vespers	14 9:30am - Various	15 7am - Election Day 9:30am - Akathist 7pm - Catechumen Inquirer Class at Starbucks	16 7pm - Presanctified	17 8am - Matins	18 9:30am - Various 7pm - PRESANCTIFIE	19 9:40am - Hours 10am - MEMORIAL 4pm - Confessions 5pm - Vigil
20 <b>ST. GREGORY PALAMAS</b> 9am - Choir 9:40am - Hours 10am - Divine Liturgy	21 9:30am - Various	22 9:30am - Akathist 7pm - Catechumen Inquirers Class at Starbucks	23 7pm - Presanctified	24 2pm - Vespers 7pm - Vigil	25 <b>ANNUNCIATION</b> 10am - VESPERAL Liturgy	26 9:40am - Hours 10am - Divine Liturgy 4pm - Confessions 5pm - Vigil
27 <b>HOLY CROSS</b> 9am - Choir 9:40am - Hours 10am - Liturgy 6pm - Pan-Orthodox	28 9:30am - Various	29 9:30am - Akathist 7pm - Catechumen Inquirers Class at Starbucks	30 7pm - Presanctified	31 8am - Matins	1 <b>ST. MARY OF EGYPT:</b> 9:30 am - Various 7 pm - Presanctified	2 10am - MEMORIAL 4pm - Confessions 5pm - Vigil