

ST. NICHOLAS ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN CHURCH

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Very Reverend Michael Speck – Pastor

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Office Hours by Appointment

Reverend Deacon David Donch Reverend Deacon Michael W. Speck

Sr. Warden - Greg Michaels Jr. Warden - Rocco Lupo

Reader Nathaniel Donch

Sunday, October 25, 2020



Saturday, October 25 – No Vespers

**Sunday, October 26 – 10:00 AM – Divine Liturgy
Pork Chop Dinner**

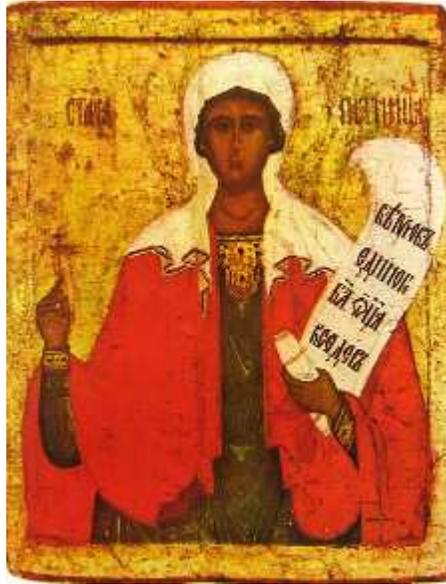
Wednesday, October 28 – No Divine Liturgy

Saturday, October 31 -5:00 PM – No Vespers

Sunday, November 1 – 10:00 AM – Divine Liturgy

Wednesday, November 4 – 8:30 AM Divine Liturgy

Greatmartyr Paraskeva of Iconium



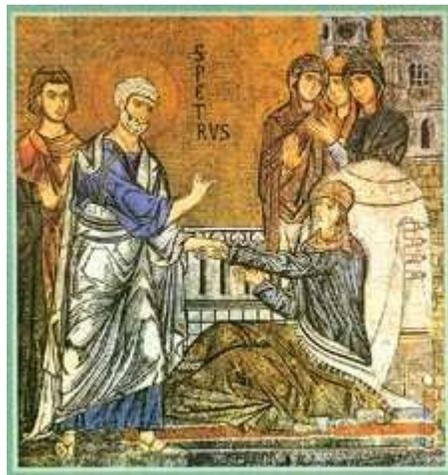
Commemorated on [October 28](#)

The Great Martyr Paraskeva of Iconium, lived during the third century in a rich and pious family. The parents of the saint especially revered Friday, the day of the Passion of the Lord, and therefore they called their daughter Paraskeva. This name, Paraskeva, also means Friday. Young Paraskeva with all her heart loved purity and the loftiness of the virginal life, and she took a vow of celibacy. She wanted to devote all her life to God and to enlighten pagans with the light of Christ.

Because of her confession of the Orthodox Faith, the pagans in a frenzy seized her and brought her to the city prefect. They demanded that she offer unholy sacrifice to the pagan idols. With a steady heart, and trusting on God, the saint refused this demand. For this she underwent great torments: after stripping her, they tied her to a tree and beat her with rods. Then the torturers raked her pure body with iron claws. Finally, they threw her into prison, exhausted by the torture and lacerated to the bone. But God did not forsake the holy sufferer, and miraculously healed her wounds. Not heeding this divine miracle, the executioners continued with their torture of Saint Paraskeva, and finally, they cut off her head.

Saint Paraskeva has always enjoyed a special love and veneration among the Orthodox people. Many pious customs and observances are associated with her. In the ancient Russian accounts of the Saints' Lives, the name of the Great Martyr is inscribed as: "Saint Paraskeva, also called Piatnitsa (in Russian: Friday)." Churches dedicated to Saint Paraskeva in antiquity were given the name Piatnitsa. Small wayside chapels in Rus received the name Piatnitsa. The simple Russian people called the Martyr Paraskeva variously Piatnitsa, Piatina, Petka. Icons of Saint Paraskeva were especially venerated and embellished by the faithful. Russian iconographers usually depicted the martyr as an austere ascetic, tall of stature, with a radiant crown upon her head. Icons of the saint guard pious and happy households. By Church belief, Saint Paraskeva is protectress of fields and cattle. She is also a healer of people from grievous illness of both body and soul.

Saint Tabitha the Widow, raised from the dead by St. Peter

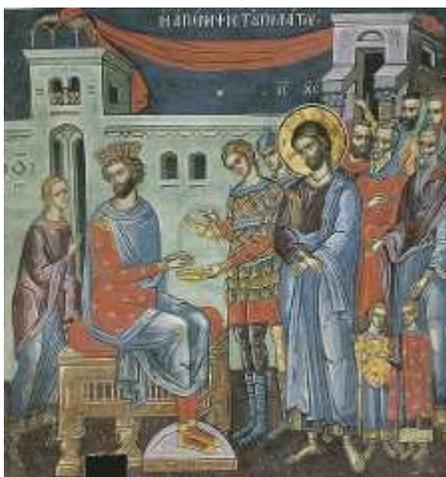


Commemorated on [October 25](#)

Saint Tabitha, the widow raised from the dead by the Apostle Peter, was a virtuous and kindly woman who belonged to the Christian community in Joppa. Being grievously ill, she suddenly died. At the time, the Apostle Peter was preaching at Lydda, not far from Joppa. Messengers were sent to him with an urgent request for help. When

the Apostle arrived at Joppa, Tabitha was already dead. On bended knee, Saint Peter made a fervent prayer to the Lord. Then he went to the bed and called out, “Tabitha, get up!” She arose, completely healed (Acts 9:36). Saint Tabitha is considered the patron saint of tailors and seamstresses, since she was known for sewing coats and other garments (Acts 9:39).

Saint Claudia Procula



Commemorated on [October 27](#)

Saint Matthew is the only Evangelist to mention Pilate’s wife, who told him “Have nothing to do with that just man, because I have suffered many things in a dream today because of him” (Matthew 27:19). She is not identified by name, but the author of the apocryphal Acts of Paul says that she received Baptism from the Apostle of the Gentiles. In the apocryphal Gospel of Nikodemos she is called Procla, or Procula. Beginning in the late fourth, or early fifth century, she is known as Claudia Procula. Pontius Pilate would not free Christ, because he was afraid of the Jews, After her husband’s death, Claudia Procula is said to have embraced Christianity. After living her life in the utmost goodness and piety, she surrendered her soul in peace. There are other accounts, however, which say that she was a martyr.

ST. NICHOLAS PARISH NEWS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

October 25, 2020



The Sisterhood will be making sauerkraut pierogies on November 5, 6 and 7. Please consider helping with this charitable work.

As the holidays approach, please continue to keep our food pantry ministry in mind. God bless you all for your generosity and caring. As we hear in today's Gospel telling the story of Lazarus and the rich man, God asks us to be generous with our kindness toward one another in our words, deeds and thoughts. In so doing we follow the example of our Lord Jesus Christ who humbled Himself and sacrificed Himself for us that we may have life everlasting.

Many thanks to all who have helped in preparing for our Pork Chop Dinner today. Your continued dedication has made this event a great success. God Bless You All!

+ St. John Chrysostom, *Four Discourses, Chiefly on the Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus, Discourse 2.1-2*



From the parable, it is quite certain that souls when they leave the body do not still linger here, but are forthwith led away. And hear how it is shown: 'It came to pass,' it is said, 'that he died, and was carried away by the angels.' Not the souls of the just only, but also those of sinners are led away. This also is clear from the case of another rich man. For when his land brought forth abundantly, he said within himself, 'What shall I do? I will pull down my barns and build greater,' (Luke xii. 18.) Than this state of mind nothing could be more wretched. He did in truth pull down his barns; for secure storehouses are not built with walls of stone; they are 'the mouths of the poor.' But this man neglecting these, was busy about stone walls. What, however, did God say to him? '*Thou fool, this night shall they require thy soul of thee.*' Mark also: in one passage it is said that the soul is carried away by angels; in the other, that '*they* require it;' and in the latter case *they* lead it away as a prisoner; in the former, they guard and conduct it as a crowned victor. And like as in the arena a combatant, having received many wounds, is drenched with blood; his head being then encircled with a crown, those who stand ready by the spot take him up, and with great applause and praise they bear him home amid shouting and admiration. In this way the angels on that occasion led Lazarus also away. But in the other instance dreadful powers, probably sent for that purpose, required the soul. For it is not of its own accord that the soul departs this life; indeed, it is not able. For if when we travel from one city to another we need guides, much more does the soul stand in want of those who can conduct it, when it is separated from the flesh, and is entering upon the future state of existence.

Why Doesn't God Kill the Devil?

by Sergey Khudiev



We can feel the correctness of our faith, but we cannot always explain it or prove it to an unbeliever, especially to someone who is, for some reason, irritated by our worldview. Reasonable questions of an atheist can sometimes bewilder even the most sincere Christian.

It often happens that one person's sin causes suffering to innocent others hurting those who cannot be "held guilty" of his choice. Shouldn't God prevent at least these consequences? Why does He allow suffering of the innocent?

God created the world as a harmonious unity. People are called to communicate with one another, with God and with angels. Human nature presumes that we form different relationships with one another, and this is God's plan. Even in this fallen world we can serve our neighbor through love. Geniuses of art or science share their discoveries and creations with humanity; wizards help others to become wiser. We constantly come into contact with various manifestations of kindness and service. Farmers grow wheat for us, bakers bake bread with it, drivers deliver it to shops, janitors keep everything clean, etc.

Sin however can also exploit this interrelation. Evil people can spread false and harmful ideas, cheaters can cheat, and murderers can kill. Generally speaking, people can be unfair to one another in many ways. In a world where free beings are called to grow in wisdom showing love and care for their fellow man, they can also renounce love and wisdom and act out of hatred and competition.

Is it possible to stop this injustice? God will do that in the end. To accomplish that it will be necessary to somehow isolate those who do evil, remove them from the world or “separate the wicked from the righteous,” as the Scripture says. We call that event the Last Judgment, and we call the place of this isolation hell.

God could perform judgment at this very minute, but then all who have not responded to His call to repentance and faith will remain outside. God tolerates the wicked – even when they harm the innocent – because he expects them to repent.

But how can we be guilty of the Fall – an event that happened long before us and without our participation?

Fall from grace is not only an event that took place sometime in the past. The story described in the third chapter of Genesis is our experience too. We ourselves listen to the Serpent rather than God, and having sinned, we shift the responsibility to others, like Adam shifted it to Eve (and indirectly to God), and Eve to the tempting snake. We are not only heritors, but also active participants in the Fall.

Why cannot God change a person immediately when that person asks for God’s help (for example, it can be very difficult to get rid of bad habits)? Or doesn’t He want to?

Because a personality cannot be remodeled instantly, without being destroyed. This instant change would mean that God destroyed one person and simply created someone else in his place. The request “Lord, make me virtuous, but so that I do not take part in this” is a request “Lord, make me not me.”

A person’s inclinations, character, habits, preferences cannot be changed instantly. It is a long process of spiritual and moral growth, impossible without the will of that person himself.

It is the grace of God that completes that process but it happens from within, through personal will of the person. For example, my laziness or anger are my personality traits hence a part of me. It is something that only I can change by accepting God’s help with this.

Christians say that behind the entire world’s evil is the devil that “fights with God.” But how could he fight the almighty God? Why doesn’t God do away with the devil, then?

Indeed, behind the evil of the world is the first rebel – a powerful spirit that rebelled against God at the dawn of the universe and was followed by many other spirits that we call “demons”. Satan means adversary, and the devil (Greek *diabolos*) is a slanderer. Already in the third chapter of Genesis, he appears in the form of a serpent, inciting our ancestors to break the commandment of God. People sin of their own free will, but the devil acts as a deceiver, slanderer and instigator. For example, “the devil ... put in the heart of Judas Iscariot to betray [Jesus]” (John 13: 2) or Ananias – to lie to the Holy Spirit (Acts 5: 3). It is Satan who deceives the nations (Rev 13: 4), it is he who is behind the omachies and the persecution of the Church. He acts in the world through people who are seduced and deceived by him.

Satan does not present a business card, and his suggestions reach us in the form of thoughts that come to us (in the Russian ascetic tradition, such demonic provocation is called “prilog”) or through other people.

However, each person is responsible for his own choice: he can either listen to the incitement of Satan or ignore it. He decides for himself to either willingly get carried away by sin or to resist it.

The devil is in no way an “anti-god” of any kind. He is just a creature, and his heavenly counterpart is by no means God, but the archangel Michael. The devil only exists because God allows him to exist.

The question from a famous novel “why God no kill the devil, so make him no more do wicked?”, which Friday puts to Robinson Crusoe, has several answers at once.

Firstly, the devil is not so much a person as a position – if you destroy this spirit, his place at the bottom of the hellish hierarchy will immediately be taken by one of his comrades in the fall. To exterminate all fallen beings who have ever opposed God would be to eradicate free will as such from creation.

Secondly, it would not be a victory. The victory that God wants to lead people to is victory through a voluntary break with Satan and reunion with God. If, for example, a child is stuck with a bad company, the worried father may shoot them, but will he return the child’s love and trust? The answer is, most likely, “no”. Freedom of a person means that he himself decides whom to rub shoulders with, even if this company is very bad. God fights with Satan not for resources or territories (that would make no sense since Satan is just a creation) but for the souls of people. Simple

violence, as would be the case with plainly killing Satan, is ineffective here.

Thirdly, we can turn to one more representation of conflict between God and Satan that we find in the Scripture, one of a trial. God wins by asserting truth, not power.

People are honored to be active participants in the cosmic battle between the forces of good and evil – and this battle unfolds, first of all, in our souls.

As the book of Revelation says, “And the great dragon was cast out, the ancient serpent, called the devil and Satan, who deceived the whole universe, was cast out to earth, and his angels were cast out with him. And I heard a loud voice speaking in heaven: now has come salvation and the power and kingdom of our God and the authority of His Christ, because the accuser of our brethren, who slandered them before our God day and night, has been cast out. They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death.”- Rev 12: 9-11.

We see here not a victory won by violence, but a victory won by the blood (i. e. sacrificial death) of Jesus Christ, the martyrs faithful to death and their testimony about the truth.

As one ascetic said, we can glorify God through good things, when we accept them with thanksgiving, and through bad things, when we resolutely reject them.

The ability to say “no” to Satan’s claims is an opportunity for spiritual correction and growth. Metaphorically speaking, we are finding ourselves in the situation of the Garden of Eden, when the

Serpent incites us to break the commandment, and we have every chance to say “no” to him. (St. Elizabeth Convent, Minsk, Belarus)