

Week Three: Advent - The Coming of Christ

During this week during our preparation for the feast of Christmas we have the great American feast of Thanksgiving. This is one of the holidays that has not been totally taken over by commercial interests and is a beautiful time when families come together and offer thanks to God. At Saint George we celebrate this event with a Divine Liturgy at 9:00am on Thursday morning. Come with your family for Liturgy which is the greatest offering of thanksgiving, receive Holy Communion together, and then return home to enjoy the family feast in thanksgiving.



Read 1 Chronicles 29:10-19: This is a prayer of Thanksgiving by king David when he had made provision for building of the Temple. What was the purpose of offering this prayer?

Why is it impossible to give anything to God?

Why did he gather all that wealth to build the Temple?

How are David's and the people's gifts offered to God?

What does David ask of the Lord concerning his people?

Read Phil 1:3-11: This is a personal expression of thanksgiving by Saint Paul about his beloved Philippian Christians. For whom is St. Paul thankful and why?

What is St. Paul's personal statement to the Philippians in verse 7?

What is the source of his affection for the Philippians?

What is his prayer for them?

What are you thankful for?

How do you express your thankfulness to God?

The Divine Liturgy

The greatest encouragement we have is the sacrament of Holy Communion, which is the purpose of the Divine Liturgy. It is called Eucharist or Thanksgiving because its heart is the prayer of consecration in which the bread and wine, the basic fruits of earth and man's work are offered as gifts of thanksgiving to God which He consecrates and transforms into the precious Blood and Body of Christ. We offer these gifts to God knowing that they are also the gifts of God to us.

The priest echoes the prayer of King David we read above when he proclaims: "We offer You, Lord, these gifts from Your own gifts for all things in all circumstances!"

The prayer of consecration is known as the Anaphora.

Read and reflect on this prayer from the Divine Liturgy of Saint Basil:

Priest: Master, Lord, God, worshipful Father almighty, it is truly just and right to the majesty of Your holiness to praise You, to hymn You, to bless You, to worship You, to give thanks to You, to glorify You, the only true God, and to offer to You this our spiritual worship with a contrite heart and a humble spirit. For You have given us to know Your truth. Who is worthy to praise Your mighty acts? Or to make known all Your praises? Or tell of all Your wonderful deeds at all times? Master of all things, Lord of heaven and earth, and of every creature visible and invisible, You are seated upon the throne of glory and behold the depths. You are without beginning, invisible, incomprehensible, beyond words, unchangeable. You are the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is the great God and Savior of our hope, the image of Your goodness, the true seal of revealing in Himself You, the Father. He is the living Word, the true God, eternal wisdom, life, sanctification, power, and the true light. Through Him the Holy Spirit was manifested, the spirit of truth the gift of Sonship, the pledge of our future inheritance, the first fruits of eternal blessings, the life giving power, the source of sanctification through whom every rational and spiritual creature is made capable of worshipping You and giving You eternal glorification, for all things are subject to You. For You are praised by the angels, archangels, thrones, dominions, principalities, authorities, powers, and the many eyed Cherubim. Round about You stand the Seraphim, one with six wings and the other with six wings; with two they cover their faces; with two they cover their feet; with two they fly, crying out to one another with unceasing voices and ever resounding praises:

Priest: Singing the victory hymn, proclaiming, crying out, and saying:

People: Holy, holy, holy, Lord Sabaoth, heaven and earth are filled with Your glory. Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna to God in the highest.

Priest: Together with these blessed powers, loving Master we sinners also cry out and say: Truly You are holy and most holy, and there are no bounds to the majesty of Your holiness. You are holy in all Your works, for with righteousness and true judgment You have ordered all things for us. For having made man by taking dust from the earth, and having honored him with Your own image, O God, You placed him in a garden of delight, promising him eternal life and the enjoyment of everlasting blessings in the observance of Your commandments. But when he disobeyed You, the true God who had created him, and was led astray by the deception of the serpent becoming subject to death through his own transgressions, You, O God, in Your righteous judgment, expelled him from paradise into this world, returning him to the earth from which he was taken, yet providing for him the salvation of regeneration in Your Christ. For You did not forever reject Your creature whom You made, O Good One, nor did You forget the work of Your hands, but because of Your tender compassion, You visited him in various ways: You sent forth prophets; You performed mighty works by Your saints who in every generation have pleased You. You spoke to us by the mouth of Your servants the prophets, announcing to us the salvation which was to come; You gave us the law to help us; You appointed angels as guardians. And when the fullness of time had come, You spoke to us through Your Son Himself, through whom You created the ages. He, being the splendor of Your glory and the image of Your being, upholding all things by the word of His power, thought it not robbery to be equal with You, God and Father. But, being God

before all ages, He appeared on earth and lived with humankind. Becoming incarnate from a holy Virgin, He emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant, conforming to the body of our lowliness, that He might change us in the likeness of the image of His glory. For, since through man sin came into the world and through sin death, it pleased Your only begotten Son, who is in Your bosom, God and Father, born of a woman, the holy Theotokos and ever virgin Mary; born under the law, to condemn sin in His flesh, so that those who died in Adam may be brought to life in Him, Your Christ. He lived in this world, and gave us precepts of salvation. Releasing us from the delusions of idolatry, He guided us to the sure knowledge of You, the true God and Father. He acquired us for Himself, as His chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation. Having cleansed us by water and sanctified us with the Holy Spirit, He gave Himself as ransom to death in which we were held captive, sold under sin. Descending into Hades through the cross, that He might fill all things with Himself, He loosed the bonds of death. He rose on the third day, having opened a path for all flesh to the resurrection from the dead, since it was not possible that the Author of life would be dominated by corruption. So He became the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep, the first born of the dead, that He might be Himself the first in all things. Ascending into heaven, He sat at the right hand of Your majesty on high and He will come to render to each according to His works. As memorials of His saving passion, He has left us these gifts which we have set forth before You according to His commands. For when He was about to go forth to His voluntary, ever memorable, and life-giving death, on the night on which He was delivered up for the life of the world, He took bread in His holy and pure hands, and presenting it to You, God and Father, and offering thanks, blessing, sanctifying, and breaking it:

Priest: He gave it to His holy disciples and apostles saying: Take, eat, this is my body which is broken for you and for the forgiveness of sins.

People: Amen.

Priest: Likewise, He took the cup of the fruit of vine, and having mingled it, offering thanks, blessing, and sanctifying it.

Priest: He gave it to His holy disciples and apostles saying: Drink of this all of you. This is my blood of the new Covenant, shed for you and for many, for the forgiveness of sins.

People: Amen.

Priest: Do this in remembrance of me. For as often as you eat this Bread and drink this Cup, you proclaim my death, and you confess my resurrection. Therefore, Master, we also, remembering His saving passion and life giving cross, His three; day burial and resurrection from the dead, His ascension into heaven, and enthronement at Your right hand, God and Father, and His glorious and awesome second coming.

Priest: We offer to You these gifts from Your own gifts in all and for all.

People: We praise You, we bless You, we give thanks to You, and we pray to You, Lord our God.

Priest: Therefore, most holy Master, we also, Your sinful and unworthy servants, whom You have made worthy to serve at Your holy altar, not because of our own righteousness (for we have not done anything good upon the earth), but because of Your mercy and compassion, which You have so richly poured upon us, we dare to approach Your holy altar, and bring forth the symbols of the holy Body and Blood of Your Christ. We pray to You and call upon You, O Holy of Holies, that by the favor of Your goodness, Your Holy Spirit may come upon us and upon the gifts here presented, to

bles, sanctify, and make this bread to be the precious Body of our Lord and God and Savior Jesus Christ.

How can you prepare for and regularly experience the Liturgy as your foundation of a thankful life before God?

Is your life outside the Liturgy a “eucharist/thankful” life or is it one burdened by complaining, fault-finding and resentful feeling?

How can you grow toward a more thankful life?

Read John 1:35-51. On Saturday this week we celebrate the feast day of **Saint Andrew** who was a fisherman and was the first called of the disciples. Here is the hymn which is sung at his feast:

Let us praise for his courage Andrew the theologian, first Apostle of the Savior and brother of Peter; for in like manner as he drew his brother to Christ, he cries out also to us: “Come, for we have found the One Whom the world desires.”

Kontakian Hymn of Feast of Saint Andrew

Saint Andrew is especially important to our Church, as our apostolic succession of our clergy is linked back to him. After Pentecost Andrew went to many lands, but among them was a town on the northern coast of Asia Minor called Byzantium. It was this town that eventually became the capital of the Roman Empire and the center of Christianity. It was renamed by Saint Constantine the Great as Constantinople. It is in this city where to this day (renamed Istanbul by the Ottomans) our Patriarch Bartholomew resides. Andrew also carried the Gospel message in Greece and was martyred in Patras. Who was the teacher of the two disciples before Jesus invited the to follow Him?

What did Andrew do at once when called?

- a. He found
- b. and told him
- c. then he

List ways we can tell people about Christ and bring them to Him:

Read Lk 18:35-43

On Sunday December 1st we hear the story of Jesus healing of Blind Beggar. Jesus often meets with handicapped people and gives them aid or healing. In ancient time it was thought that such persons were handicapped because of a demonic possession. But Jesus did not treat them any different than others. He did not approach them as persons disabled but as ones with a disability.

How do we view persons with a disability?

How can we help someone who is disabled during this season as we approach the Nativity of our Savior?

Reference: *A Year of the Lord Liturgical Bible Studies, Vol 2* by Theodore Stylianopoulos