



SAINT LUKE THE EVANGELIST

G R E E K O R T H O D O X C H U R C H

DECEMBER 3, 2017—14TH SUNDAY OF LUKE

The Prophet Zephaniah (Sophonias) was a contemporary of the Prophet Jeremiah and the Prophetess Oldama. He was from the tribe of Simeon, and was the ninth of the Twelve Minor Prophets of the Old Testament. The prophet lived at the royal court, where he preached repentance and helped King Josiah eliminate idol-worship.

He prophesied about the calamities that were to come for the people of Judea and the surrounding regions: Gaza, Ascalon, Crete, and against the Moabites, the Ammonites and the Ninevites.

Saint Theodoulos was an eparch during the reign of Theodosius the Great. He resigned his position because he did not want to be distracted by vain worldly cares.

After his wife's death, Saint Theodoulos gave his wealth away to the poor and became a monk. He traveled to Edessa and lived on top of a pillar for thirty years, eating only once a week.

Saint Theodoulos the Stylite departed to the Lord around 440.

Saint John the Silent was born around 454 in the city of Nicopolis, Armenia into the family of a military commander named Enkratius and his wife Euphemia. The boy began to study Holy Scripture, and he loved solitude and prayer with all his heart.

With the inheritance his parents left him, John built a church dedicated to the Most Holy Theotokos. At eighteen years of age, John became a monk, living an ascetic life of fasting, prayer, and temperance with ten other monks at the church he had founded.

At the request of the citizens of Colonia, the Metropolitan of Sebaste consecrated the twenty-eight-year-old John as Bishop of Colonia. Having assumed the episcopal throne, the saint did not alter his strict ascetic manner of life. Under the influence of the saint his relatives, his brother Pergamios (an associate of the emperors Zeno and Anastasius) and his nephew Theodore (an associate of the emperor Justinian), also lived in a Christian manner.

In John's tenth year as bishop, the governorship of Armenia was assumed by Pazinikos, the husband of the saint's sister, Maria. The new governor began to interfere in spiritual and ecclesiastical matters, and there was unrest in the Church. Saint John then went to Constantinople, and through Archbishop Euthymius, he entreated the emperor Zeno to defend the Armenian Church from the evil Governor.

Overwhelmed by worldly quarrels, John secretly left his diocese and sailed to Jerusalem. With tears he besought God to show him a place where he might live and find salvation. A bright star appeared, which led



THE HYMNS OF THE THIRD ANTIPHON

Today is Mode 1.

Before the Entrance...

Resurrectional Apolytikion.

MODE 1.

The stone had been secured with a seal by the Judeans, * and a guard of soldiers was watching Your immaculate body. * You rose on the third day, O Lord * and Savior, granting life unto the world. * For this reason were the powers of heaven crying out to You, O Life-giver: * Glory to Your resurrection, O Christ; * glory to Your kingdom; * glory to Your dispensation, only One who loves mankind. **(x2)**

After the Entrance...

Resurrectional Apolytikion.

MODE 1.

The stone had been secured with a seal by the Judeans, * and a guard of soldiers was watching Your immaculate body. * You rose on the third day, O Lord * and Savior, granting life unto the world. * For this reason were the powers of heaven crying out to You, O Life-giver: * Glory to Your resurrection, O Christ; * glory to Your kingdom; * glory to Your dispensation, only One who loves mankind.

Apolytikion for the Church.

MODE PL. 1.

The holy Apostle, the All-hymned Luke, * who is acknowledged by the Church of Christ * as the recorder of the Acts of the Apostles, * and the splen-

did author of the Gospel of Christ. * Let us praise with sacred hymns as a physician, * who heals the infirmities of man, * and the ailments of nature, * who cleanses spiritual wounds, and prays unceasingly for our souls.

Kontakion.

MODE 3.

On this day the Virgin Maid * goes to the grotto to give birth * to the pre-eternal Word * in an ineffable manner. * Dance for joy, all the inhabited earth, on hearing. * Glorify along with Angels and with the shepherds * Him who willed that He appear as * a newborn Child, * the pre-eternal God.

“ *There is One Holy Spirit, the Advocate. As there is One God, the Father, and there is no second Father, and as there is one Only-begotten Son and Word of God, and He has no brother, so there is one only Holy Spirit, and there is no second Spirit equal in honor to Him. The Holy Spirit is a mighty Power, a being divine and unsearchable. He is living and rational, the Sanctifier of all things made by God through Christ. He enlightens the souls of the just; He inspired the prophets; he inspired the Apostles in the New Testament.* ”

—ST. CYRIL OF JERUSALEM



THE READINGS OF THE DAY

EPISTLE READING

The Letter of Paul to the Ephesians (6:10-17)

Brethren, be strong in the Lord, with the strength of his power. Put on the complete armor of God, so that you may be able to resist the devil's tactics. Truly, our struggle is not against flesh and blood but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world rulers of this darkness and against the evil spiritual forces of the supernatural realms. Therefore, put on the whole armor of God, so that you may be able to resist when the evil day comes. Having accomplished all things, may you stand your ground! Yes, stand [firm], having the belt of truth around your waist, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, having fitted shoes on your feet so as to be ready in the Good News of peace. Above all, take up the shield of faith which will enable you to quench all the fiery darts of the evil one. Take also the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit

GOSPEL READING

Luke (18: 35-43)

At that time, as Jesus was approaching Jericho, a certain blind man sat by the road, begging. Hearing a crowd going by, he asked what this meant. People told him that Jesus of Nazareth was passing by. He began to cry out, "Jesus, son of David, have mercy on me!" Then those who led the way rebuked him, ordering him to be quiet. But the blind man cried out all the more, "Son of David, have mercy on me!" Standing still, Jesus commanded that the blind man be brought to him. When the man had come near, Jesus asked him, "What do you want me to do?" The man replied, "Lord, that I may see again!" Jesus said to him, "Receive your sight. Your faith has healed you." Immediately, the man received his sight and began to follow Jesus, glorifying God. When all the people saw this, they praised God.

“Often a man for Christ's sake has been treated with insults and unjustly dishonored; martyrdom is at hand, tortures on every side, fire, swords, wild beasts, and the abyss; but the Holy Spirit gently whispers to him: “Wait for the Lord,” (Ps. 26:14) for your present sufferings are slight, while your rewards will be great; endure for a little while and you will be with the angels forever. .



ANNOUNCEMENTS

MEMORIAL SERVICES: Metropolitan Iakovos, 6 months; Pardalos Family

UPCOMING CHURCH SERVICES:

Wednesday, December 6, St. Nicholas the Wonderworker, Orthros / Divine Lit. 8:30am

NO VESPERS THIS WEEK

Scripture Study

Fr. Michael is teaching a course on St. Paul's Letter to the Galatians. The second class will be on Thursday, December 6 at 6pm. This is not a catechism class, and as such is *only intended for Orthodox Christians*. The EOB translation is required for the class and can be purchased from the Bookstore.

Stewardship 2018

The 2018 Stewardship packets have been mailed. PLEASE return your stewardship card as soon as possible. If you are not on the mailing list, please take a packet from the narthex. Thank you for your generosity!

Flower Donations Needed

We need 3 x \$100 donations in order to decorate the icon of the Nativity of our Lord. Please see Fr. Michael

Philoptochos

MEETINGS: There will be a Philoptochos general meeting on Tuesday, December 12 at 6pm. All are welcome to attend. There will be a board meeting at 5:30pm.

CHRISTMAS CARD: If you would like to be included in our Community Christmas card, please see Elly Aslanidis or Rebecca Windle to sign up. A suggested minimum \$15 donation is requested. Proceeds benefit Philoptochos in their charitable

work. Extra forms are in the narthex. Deadline is December 10.

ANGEL WREATH: *Today is the last day to return your gifts.* If you were not able to purchase the item for the tag that you took, please see Rebecca Windle or Karen Sade today after services..

Cooking Class and Recipe Swap: Philoptochos is sponsoring a Cooking Class on December 16 at 10:00am. Please see registration form for details. See Rebecca Windle if you have any questions.

ADOPT A SOLDIER: This year, we are again participating in an Adopt a Soldier Program. Tags with the most needed/wanted items are available in the Narthex. If you would like to participate, take one or more tags and bring back the items *by December 17*. Items will be shipped as soon as a shipping box is full, so please bring them in as soon as possible. Christmas cards are also available in the Narthex for anyone who would like to sign a card. Thank you!

“*Let no one, therefore, separate the Old from the New Testament, and say that the Spirit in the Old is one and in the New another; to do so is to offend the Holy Spirit Himself, who is honored with Father and Son, and on the occasion of holy Baptism is included with them in the Holy Trinity.*”

—ST. CYRIL OF JERUSALEM

Saint John to the Lavra of Saint Sava.

John, concealing his episcopal rank, was accepted in the community as a simple novice. Under the guidance of the igumen Saint Sava (December 5), Bishop John toiled obediently for more than four years at every task he was assigned. When a guest-house was built at the Lavra, Saint John served the workers, serving their food and assisting in the construction of the building. When a cenobitic monastery for novices was being built, John was once again assigned to help the workers.

Seeing Saint John's humility and love of labor, Saint Sava deemed him worthy of ordination to presbyter. Saint John was forced to reveal his rank to Patriarch Elias of Jerusalem (494-517), who told Saint Sava that John could not be ordained. Moreover, he said that John was to live in silence, and that no one should trouble him. Soon the Lord also revealed Saint John's secret to Saint Sava. Saint John spent four years in his cell, receiving no one and not going out even for church.

Desiring ever greater solitude and increased abstinence, Saint John quit the Lavra and withdrew into the desert, where he spent more than nine years, eating plants and grass. He survived a devastating incursion of the Saracens and did not perish, only because the Lord sent him a defender: a ferocious lion. When the enemy tried to harm the saint, the lion attacked them and they scattered in fright. Tradition speaks of many miracles Saint John performed during this time in the desert.

When Saint Sava returned after an extended stay in Scythopolis, he persuaded Saint John to forsake the wilderness and to live at the monastery. After this, the Lord, in a miraculous way, revealed to everyone at the Lavra that the monk John was actually a bishop.

When Saint John reached age seventy, his holy and God-bearing spiritual Father Saint Sava died. The saint grieved deeply over this, since he was not present at the time. Saint Sava appeared to him

in a vision, and having consoled him, he foretold that there would be much toil ahead in the struggle against heresy. Saint John even had to leave his solitude to strengthen the brethren in the struggle with the Origenists.

Saint John the Silent spent sixty-six years at the Lavra of Saint Sava the Sanctified. Through his constant ascetic efforts, by his untiring prayer and humble wisdom, Saint John acquired the grace of the Holy Spirit. At his prayers, many miracles took place, and he was able to discern the secret thoughts of people. He healed the sick and those possessed by demons. Even during his lifetime he saved those who invoked his name from certain destruction. Once, he scattered fig seeds on barren rock, and a beautiful and fruitful tree sprang up. In time, the tree grew so much that it overshadowed the saint's cell.

Saint John the Silent departed to the Lord in peace at the age of 104.

The life of Saint Arsenios the Cappadocian

by St. Paisios the Athonite

Part 3 — Final

In addition to his other spiritual activities, it was St. Arsenios' rule to remain in isolation in his cell every Wednesday and Friday and to do spiritual exercises and to pray. On these two days the threshold of his cell served as a substitute for him. Whenever any sick person arrived from afar, who did not know his rule and knocked at the door, Father Arsenios would certainly open it, but would not speak. He learned about the illness of the person concerned through signs, found the right prayer, read it and the sufferer would recover. On other occasions though, people knocked but he did not answer. Surely, during such times of prayer, he must have been in an ecstatic state of spiritual contemplation. Events indicate that on those days when

he would shut himself in his cell, not only would he draw down divine powers of Heaven, while praying, but he, too, would be drawn up to Heaven by Angelic powers.

Father Arsenios, like the good shepherd, kept close to his fleeing flock. Despite the fact that an exchange of populations was taking place, the Turks still behaved like angry hornets, as always.

From Ahyiavoudes, Father Arsenios returned to Pharasa on foot, sixty kilometres all total, (thirty there and thirty back), to fetch the holy Relic of Saint John Chrysostom, which he had forgotten, from the altar of the Church of Saints Varachesios and Ionas. He went on this trip without taking any of his companions with him, so as not to tire them. He then returned to his flock, who were anxiously waiting for him.

In Ahyiavoudes, the Turkish authorities gave him a gendarme for his protection, to look after him and to hand him over alive in Nigde. And so, while they were walking from Enehil to Oulagac, they came across an enraged Turk on horseback, who said to the gendarme:

“What do you want with him (he meant Father Arsenios), and why don’t you throw him somewhere and be done with him?”

One of the three young men became frightened that they might harm Father Arsenios, and told him to tell these Turks that he was an official person and that they had better be careful. Father Arsenios answered him, “Can such things be said? Come now, move on,” and they continued on their way. The Turk did not manage to go even twenty metres further, when he fell off his horse, according to Moisis Koglanidis. When the gendarme saw this, he said to Father Arsenios, “Sen sin Aziz (You are a Saint)!”

From then on the officer behaved with great politeness. Father Arsenios said to his people later, “Before I’d even managed to put a curse on him, he fell off his horse!”

In Nigde, not only were the Pharasiotes waiting for him, but also many sick inhabitants of the town, who wanted to be healed when they heard he would be passing that way. Among the others was a woman, the daughter of a wealthy man, possessed and tormented by a terrible demon. When Father Arsenios saw many people running out of curiosity to see the tortured soul, doing disorderly things, he sent them all away and told her father to bring her back the next day. This he did, and when Father Arsenios had read the Gospel over her, the demon left her at once and she became well.

Out of gratitude, the girl’s father took out his money bag and begged Hadjiephentis to accept it; Father Arsenios, of course, would not accept it at all. The man kept insisting, however, thinking that his daughter would fall ill again if Father Arsenios did not accept the money. When Father Arsenios saw the father’s insistence, he emptied the money bag on the ground and said:

“If you don’t want your daughter to fall ill again, take this money with your own hands and divide it among the poor.”

And so with great joy the man did, indeed, distribute the money himself to the poor.

One can see that while being in the midst of that human abandonment, on the road of hardships, holy Father Arsenios was also united with God and continually dispensing Divine Grace, making those around him feel the presence of a divine security. The Pharasiotes, upon seeing Father Arsenios still wanting to continue his rule of prayer even after the five-day ordeal of constant walking at the age of eighty-three years, put him on a cart by force to have the blessing of his presence with them.

Hadjiephentis did not cease comforting them later as well, for it was necessary to prepare them to accept calmly both separation among themselves and also his own departure for the next life. He reminded them of what he had told them in their native village:

“When we go to Greece, our village will be scattered about in many different areas. It will be a real dispersion.”

And he would also say to them: “When we get to Greece, I shall live only forty days and I shall die on an island.”

His holy personality continued to impart Grace and comfort even on the ship. His face shone with an ascetic lustre, which was like the colour of a ripe quince. He had already become immaterial as a result of the superhuman spiritual battles he had waged for the love of Christ, as well as from his great labours for the love of his flock, which he had guided for fifty-five years like a good shepherd.

What had wearied the tireless and good labourer Father Arsenios most all those years in the Vineyard of Christ was not so much the labour itself as was the constant vigilant watch that had to be kept over the vineyard. Pharasa was in a very remote spot, and all around there were wild beasts, the Turkish irregulars, who were always breaking the fences and barriers, to get in and to destroy what was inside.

Seeing all this great anguish, the Good Lord “uprooted the vines” in their entirety and carried them away, together with the vine-dresser. The vines He transplanted to His great vineyard in Greece, and the vinedresser He gathered unto Himself to finally find rest.

On the ship, each family was indeed like a little cluster of vine shoots which the affectionate Father Arsenios tended with his great love. Since he saw some of them going hungry and not eating the foods provided, because they were not fasting foods (having been prepared with fat), he said:

“Never mind about fasting now, just eat whatever comes out of the pot. When you are settled, then you can return to your fasting.”

Then he, too, would take out of the folds of his cassock a barley cake and keep them company, saying:

“Don’t pay attention to me, because I’m a monk.”

After many trials and tribulations, the ship docked at the Greek port of Saint George in Piraeus, and upon setting foot on Greek soil, they joyfully celebrated that great day, which was the Elevation of the Precious Cross, September 14, 1924, according to the feast day Calendar of their homeland. They remained three weeks, confined behind barbed wire, at Saint George’s, and then went on to Kerkyra, where they were temporarily accommodated in Kerkyra’s Castle.

There, however, good Hadjiophentis fell ill, and the Pharasiotes became very worried. Against his will, they took him to the city hospital, so that he would not be subjected to the hardships of life in the castle.

Father Arsenios did not wish to be separated from them in any way, and begged them tearfully:

“Let me die beside you.”

But out of love they did not listen to him; they believed he would recover in hospital with the care he would receive, and would be with them again, although he had often told them:

“In Greece I shall live only forty days.”

When the days were at hand, he had, of course, to depart for Heaven and to help them even more from above, since he had boldness before God. All told, he lived two weeks in Kerkyra’s Castle, and celebrated the Liturgy twice in the Holy Church of Saint George. He lived another week in the hospital, where he was visited by his concerned Pharasiotes.

One day, when Prodrornos had visited him again, he asked him for his clothes, so that he could have them washed. Father Arsenios replied:

“Why bother to wash them? Not tomorrow but the day after tomorrow they’ll be going into the ground.” Prodrornos did not understand and asked him again:

“Give them to me to wash, since you’re sickly and old now.” Father Arsenios replied: “Inasmuch as I’m old, am I not also a monk?” Indeed, he certainly

was a monk. On that day, Prodrornos saw a louse crawling on him, and took it off discreetly to kill it, because there were others about. Hadjiephentis shouted loudly:

“Don’t! Don’t kill the poor thing.”

And he took it off his hand at once and stuffed it into his clothing and said to Prodrornos:

“Let it have a little flesh to eat as well, since it found the chance to get near me now. After all, why should the worms eat all the flesh themselves?”

Then he cast an eye round at all the visitors and said:

“The soul, the soul you must take care of far more than the body, which will go into the earth and be eaten by worms.”

And that was his last sermon on the deepest meaning of life. When the others had left and only Prodrornos remained, Father Arsenios said to him, “Come, let’s bid each other farewell, Prodrornos, because the day after tomorrow I’m leaving for the next life. Our Panaghia came yesterday afternoon and told me; She even showed me around the HolyMountainas well, and I saw the Monasteries, which I’ve always wanted so much to see, but had never been worthy of it. I don’t know what to tell you, Prodrornos! There are so many Monasteries on the HolyMountain! What grand Churches! What magnificence!”

And after that he added:

“Don’t be upset that your wife, Kyriaki, will die in eight days’ time. Stephanos Karamouratidis’ wife, Almalou, will die as well in thirteen days.”

And that is indeed how things turned out.

So when his own two days had gone by, and the “day after tomorrow” had come for him to take leave, the true servant of God, Father Arsenios, having first received Holy Communion, departed for the true life close to Christ. At that moment there was not one Pharasiate beside him. He did not want anyone to stay with him so that they would not distract him from his eternal prayer.

And that was Father Arsenios! Alone, insignificantly small, with only God’s protection! Alone, great, dedicated only to God and to His Image!

Alone at the end of his life but with God alone!

When his devout chanter visited him again, he received Father Arsenios’ blessing, this time from his Relics. He found him clutching with his right hand on his breast his priceless spiritual treasure—the holy Relics of Saint John Chrysostom. Propertyless Father Arsenios had no material possessions to bequeath. Just a few tattered books.

When the Pharasites learned that Father Arsenios had fallen asleep in the Lord, they were inconsolable, even though he had prepared them for it. Many people came together and gave him a most magnificent funeral, which many of the local people also attended. He was buried in the Kerkyra’s Cemetery, in the section reserved for departed clergy. His spiritual children erected a marble slab over his grave with his name on it.

Father Arsenios fell asleep in the Lord on the 10th of November 1924 (New Calendar), at the age of eighty-three.

The Blessed Father Arsenios, the star of the East, had now set in Greece, and left her his Holy Relics.

Holy Father Arsenios Pray for Us!

“You must know too that the Holy Spirit empowers the martyrs to bear witness.”

—ST. CYRIL OF JERUSALEM