

we can hold off for a few minutes to spend some quality time with the Lord, letting Him speak to our hearts.

One more thing: If you are feeling overwhelmed and overburdened about all the things you need to do before Christmas, you probably need to re-evaluate things. Do you really have to accept every invitation you get? Can you delegate some of your responsibilities? Can you buy one less gift this year or not be so hung up on getting the biggest and/or the best gift? So often we want to control everything and/or make everything "just so" which puts extra stress and pressure on ourselves. Maybe the secret to finding meaning this Advent is letting go...

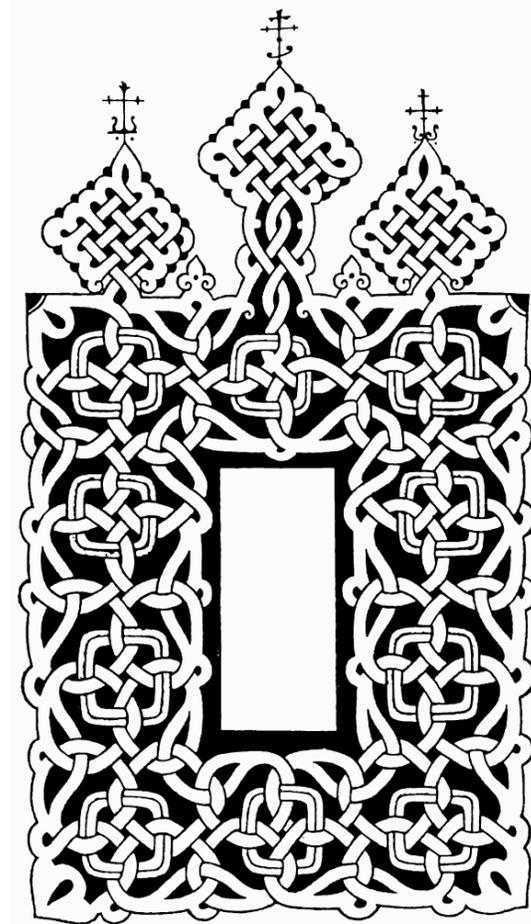


Moses as a kid

SAINT PAUL ORTHODOX CATHEDRAL

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Sunday, December 4th --Tone 7
24th Sunday of Pentecost



TODAY WE WILL CELEBRATE THE DIVINE LITURGY OF
ST. JOHN CHRYSOSTOM

SCRIPTURE READINGS

Epistle – Ephesians 2:14-22

Brothers and sisters: He is our peace, who has made us both one, and has broken down the dividing wall of hostility, by abolishing in his flesh the law of commandments and ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby bringing the hostility to an end. And he came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near; for through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father. So then you are no longer strangers and sojourners, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord; in whom you also are built into it for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.

Gospel – Luke 17:12-19

At that time, as Jesus entered a village, He was met by ten lepers, who stood at a distance and lifted up their voices and said, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us." When He saw them He said to them, "Go and show yourselves to the priests." And as they went they were cleansed. Then one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, praising God with a loud voice; and he fell on his face at Jesus' feet, giving Him thanks. Now he was a Samaritan. Then said Jesus, "Were not ten cleansed? Where are the nine? Was no one found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?" And He said to him, "Rise and go your way; your faith has made you well."

Getting Ready for the Nativity of Christ

- **Attend the liturgical services.** It is the liturgy of the church that teaches us how to pray and what to pray for. Dedicate this season to attending church with an open heart and ear asking God to reveal himself to you.

- **Go to Confession (Sacrament of Repentance).** The Sacrament of Repentance is a lost sacrament in many parishes, yet it is central to the life of the Orthodox Christian and ***the church takes it for granted that we attend confession***, four especially during the penitential times of the year (Great Lent, Nativity Fast, Apostles Fast and Dormition Fast. Cleansing and strengthening your soul is a wonderful way for preparing for Christmas. (Need a little help going to Confession? See Fr. Robert for some very helpful advice and resources as well as a time to schedule your confession.)
- **Spend time with Scripture.** What better way to prepare for Christ than to spend some time praying the Scriptures? Read along with the lectionary of the church, printed on our calendars. Alternatively, the book of Isaiah is particularly relevant for Advent. Make it a family event. Try reading a few verses each day throughout the forty days. For a schedule of pertinent readings, see Fr. Robert.
- **Give Alms.** Whether to your church or to a charitable organization, giving your time and money connects your pocketbook and yourself with those who need you and to those of whom you are in need. Our church has those we see every Sunday and yet have very tangible needs that your alms could help. In this economy there are many families who may go without basic necessities, let alone Christmas presents. If you have the means, please consider talking to Fr. Robert about how you may be of use in this area.
- **Advent Wreath.** Though not a historical part of the Eastern Christian custom, an Advent Wreath is an excellent opportunity to focus on preparing our hearts for Christ. What we do is light the candle(s) when we say our grace at supper and then use that as a starting point for talking about what Advent and Christmas is really all about.
- **Fasting.** As you already know, Advent is a penitential season, albeit not as stringent as Great Lent, and fasting is a penitential act. If you can, try fasting once or twice a week and use that time you would be eating in prayer.
- **Mental Prayer (or Contemplation).** Set aside five or ten minutes and spend them before the Lord in quietness. So often we are busy, busy, busy or when we pray, we talk at God rather than listening to him. How can we hear Him speak to our hearts or be filled with His Spirit if we don't listen? Maybe, instead of sitting in front of the television we