

to look how he can care for his manner of life during the interval. And if he does not resist the physician, and if the ulcer of the soul is increased by the application of the imposed medicaments, then let him mete out mercy to him according as he is worthy of it. **For the whole account is between God and him to whom the pastoral rule has been delivered, to lead back the wandering sheep and to cure that which is wounded by the serpent;** and that he may neither cast them down into the precipices of despair, nor loosen the bridle towards dissolution or contempt of life; but in some way or other, either by means of sternness and astringency, or by greater softness and mild medicines, to resist this sickness and exert himself for the healing of the ulcer, now examining the fruits of his repentance and wisely managing the man who is called to higher illumination. For we ought to know two things, to wit, the things which belong to strictness and those which belong to custom, and to follow the traditional form in the case of those who are not fitted for the highest things, as holy Basil teaches us.

■ Canon 102, Council of Trullo, 692 AD

Confession, the sacrament of reconciliation with the Church, must be made regular and frequent. It must become once again an abiding element in the lives of the faithful, deformalized and revitalized as the most common and normal of actions of a people continually united and reunited with each other and with God. The "general confession," approved and regulated by the Holy Synod of bishops in 197[2], and practiced as a common act of confession and repentance by those in communion with Christ in the Church, must take its place alongside individual and private confession as a sacramental sign of reconciliation, healing and forgiveness of sins.

Participation in the holy Eucharist, the sacrament of sacraments, must become normal and regular for all of the members of the Church. It must be the rule and not the exception, that the faithful come forward at the Divine Liturgy, with fear and with love, to receive the Body and Blood of Christ for the sake of their salvation and inspiration in the faith. It is the Lord himself who invites, for he himself has said: Take, eat, this is my body! Drink of it, all of you, this is my blood! He who does not eat of the Lord's body and drink of his blood with faith and devotion does not have eternal life abiding in him....Rooted in prayer and grounded in the sacramental mysteries of the Church, we are called as Orthodox Christians to go forth into the world to do the work of God and to accomplish our mission, each one of us in his or her own way as guided by the Spirit of God.

—Encyclical Letter on Spiritual Life in the Church, Documents of the OCA, 1976

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25th SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST (12th of Luke) -- Tone 8
Sunday of the Holy Forefathers.

God's coming in the flesh
the Shepherds heard
the angels praising.

And hastening as to a shepherd,
they see him as a spotless lamb
being pastured in the womb of Mary.
Praising her they said:

Hail, mother of the lamb and shepherd,
Hail, fold of spiritual sheep.

Hail, defence — against unseen foes.

Hail, key that opens — the doors of Paradise.

Hail, for things in heaven — exult with earth,

Hail, for things on earth — rejoice with heaven.

Hail, never-silent — voice — of the Apostles,

Hail, never-conquered — courage — of the Champions.

Hail, firm — foundation of the Faith,

Hail, shining — revelation of Grace.

Hail, you through whom — Hell was stripped bare,

Hail, you through whom — we were clothed with glory.

Hail, Bride without bridegroom.

-St. Romanos the Melodist, The Akathist Hymn
Section 2, Ikos 4: On the Nativity.

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

TROPARIA AND KONTAKION

Troparion, Resurrection, Tone 8: Thou didst descend from on high, O Merciful One! / Thou didst accept the three-day burial / to free us from our sufferings! // O Lord, our Life and Resurrection, glory to Thee!

Troparion, Forefathers, Tone 2: Through faith Thou didst justify the Forefathers, / betrothing through them the Church of the gentiles. / These saints exult in glory, / for from their seed came forth a glorious fruit: / She who bore Thee without seed. // So by their prayers, O Christ God, have mercy on us!

Kontakion, Forefathers, Tone 6: You did not worship the graven image, / O thrice-blessed ones, / but armed with the immaterial Essence of God, / you were glorified in a trial by fire. / From the midst of unbearable flames / you called on God, crying: / Hasten, O compassionate One! / Speedily come to our aid, / for Thou art merciful and able to do as Thou wilt.

SCRIPTURE READINGS

Epistle – Colossians 3:4-11 (*Forefathers*)

Brothers and sisters: when Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory. Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: fornication, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. On account of these the wrath of God is coming. In these you once walked, when you lived in them. But now put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and foul talk from your mouth. Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old nature with its practices and have put on the new nature, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator. Here there cannot be Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scyth'ian, slave, free man, but Christ is all, and in all.

Gospel – Luke 14:16-24 (*Forefathers*)

At that time: Jesus said, "A man once gave a great banquet, and invited many; and at the time for the banquet he sent his servant to say to those who had been invited, 'Come; for all is now ready.' But they all alike began to make excuses. The first said to him, 'I have bought a field, and I must go out and see it; I pray you, have me excused.' And another said, 'I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to examine them; I pray you, have me excused.' And another said, 'I have married a wife, and therefore I

cannot come.' So the servant came and reported this to his master. Then the householder in anger said to his servant, 'Go out quickly to the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in the poor and maimed and blind and lame.' And the servant said, 'Sir, what you commanded has been done, and still there is room.' And the master said to the servant, 'Go out to the highways and hedges, and compel people to come in, that my house may be filled. For I tell you, none of those men who were invited shall taste my banquet.'"

Prayer Behind the Ambon for this week and next week:

O God of the holy and blessed Fathers Abraham, Isaac and Jacob: You are the all-holy, the savior of the martyrs, the boast of the just, and the crown of those who have been well pleasing to you from the beginning of time.

Grant that we may remember all your saints and take part in their sufferings.

You have allowed your holy athletes, the martyrs, to fight the good fight, to finish the race of godliness, and to keep the faith they confessed.

Give us a part and inheritance, that in imitating them we may be made worthy to share in the good things you have in store for them.

Through the prayers and intercession of the pure and holy Theotokos, of the holy and glorious children Hananiah, Azariah and Mishael and of the most blessed prophet Daniel and of all your saints, have mercy on us and be a helper for us.

Deem us worthy, after being purified, to venerate the feast of the Birth of Christ our God, by the help of your life-giving Spirit, for to You is due all glory, honor and worship: Father, Son and Holy Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages.

What is the point of confession?

It behooves those who have received from God the power to loose and bind [confessors, presbyters, priests], to consider the quality of the sin and the readiness of the sinner for conversion, and to apply medicine suitable for the disease, lest if he is injudicious in each of these respects he should fail in regard to the healing of the sick person. For the disease of sin is not simple, but various and multiform, and it germinates many mischievous offshoots, from which much evil is diffused, and it proceeds further until it is checked by the power of the physician. Wherefore he who professes the science of spiritual medicine ought first of all to consider the disposition of him who has sinned, and to see whether he tends to health or (on the contrary) provokes to himself disease by his own behavior, and