

Daily Orthodox - December 29th, 2024

Today is the 27th Sunday after Pentecost.

Fasting Obligations

- **OCA, GOARCH, Antioch:** No fasting obligations.

Today, we commemorate...

1. **The Fourteen Thousand Holy Children of Bethlehem**

“When the Magi from the east did not return to Jerusalem from Bethlehem to inform Herod about the newborn King but rather, at the angel's command, returned to their homeland another way, Herod became as enraged as a wild beast and ordered all the children two years old and under in Bethlehem and its surroundings to be killed. This frightening command of the king was carried out to the letter. His soldiers beheaded some of the children with swords, smashed others against stones, trampled others underfoot, and strangled others with their hands. And the cries and wails of the mothers rose to heaven, *Lamentation, and bitter weeping; Rachel weeping for her children* (Jeremiah 31:15, Matthew 2:18), as had been prophesied. This crime against the multitude of innocent children was carried out a year after the birth of Christ, at the time when Herod was seeking to find the Divine Child. He asked Zacharias about his son John, so that he might kill him, since he naturally thought that John was the new king. As Zacharias did not turn John over, he was slain in the Temple by order of Herod. St. Simeon the God-receiver would also have been murdered soon after the Presentation in the Temple, had he not already reposed in God. After murdering the children of Bethlehem, Herod turned against the Jewish elders who had revealed to him where the Messiah would be born. He then killed Hyrcanes, the high priest, and the seventy elders of the Sanhedrin. Thus, they who had agreed

with Herod that the new Child-king must be killed came to an evil end. After that, Herod murdered his brother, sister, wife and three sons. Finally, God's punishment came to him: he began to tremble, his legs became swollen, the lower part of his body became putrid, and worms came out of the sores; his nose became blocked and an unbearable stench emanated from him. Before his last breath, he remembered that there were many captive Jews in prison, and he ordered that they all be killed so that they would not rejoice in his death. Thus, this terrible ruler gave up his inhuman soul and handed it over to the devil for eternal possession.

2. The Venerable Marcellus

“ Marcellus was from Apamea in Syria. He was the abbot of the Community of the Sleepless Ones in Constantinople. He was clairvoyant, and was a healer and great miracle-worker. He spoke with angels and easily defeated demons and drove them out. After his death, Marcellus appeared to St. Lucian, a member of his community, and told Lucian that he had implored God to take him into the Heavenly Kingdom soon. This holy and glorious man entered into rest in the year 486.

3. The Venerable Mark the Grave-digger and Theophilus the Weeper (11th c.)

“ Mark and Theophilus were monks of the Monastery of the Kiev Caves. St. Mark possessed so much grace that he commanded the dead and they obeyed him: Mark sent word to inform a dead monk, who had already been washed and over whom the funeral service had been read, “Wait until tomorrow, Brother, for your grave is not yet ready,” and the monk opened his eyes and remained alive until the following day. Theophilus wept constantly for his sins, pouring the tears he shed into a basin. Before his death, an angel appeared to him and showed him a larger basin filled with tears. These were Theophilus's tears, which had fallen to the ground, or had been wiped away with his hand, or had dried on his face. Thus, even in heaven they know and keep all our tears as well as our sufferings, labors and sighs for the sake of our salvation. These holy servants of God rested in the eleventh century and entered the Kingdom of Christ.

4. *St. Trophimus*, first bishop of Arles (3rd c.)
5. *St. Benjamin*, monk, of Nitria in Egypt (392)
6. *St. Athenodorus*, disciple of St. Pachomius the Great (4th c.)
7. *St. Evroult* (Ebrulf), abbot, of Ouche in Normandy (596)
8. *St. Thaddeus*, confessor, of the Studion (818)

9. *St. George*, bishop of Nicomedia (9th c.)
10. *Sts. Theophilus and John*, of the Kiev Caves (11th-12th c.)
11. *St. Job* (Knyaginitsky), founder of Manyava Skete (Ukraine) (1621)
12. *St. Basiliscus of Turinsk* (Siberia) (1824)
13. *St. Lawrence of Chernigov* (1950)
14. *Commemoration of all Orthodox Christians who have died from hunger, thirst, the sword, and freezing*

For more information on today's saints or commemorations not provided, see

<https://www.oca.org/saints/lives> (Slavic) and/or <https://www.goarch.org/chapel> (Greek).

Reflection

Reflections are added when it includes additional stories from the life of a saint commemorated today.

“ A story about the Most-pure Virgin Mary: She conceived the Lord Jesus on a Friday, just as His passion was on a Friday, and she gave birth to Him on the first day of the week. On the first day of the week God said, *Let there be light* (Genesis 1:3); on the first day of the week, manna fell from heaven; on this day the Lord and Savior was born; and on this day He was baptized in the Jordan. At that time, there lived in Bethlehem the aged Salome, a kinswoman of Joseph and Mary. She was unable to receive her kinfolk at her house but visited them in the shepherd's cave. When the Most-holy Virgin immaculately gave birth to the Lord and Savior, Salome came to visit her. She was amazed that such a young girl could give birth without the aid of a midwife, swaddle the Child herself, and beside all of that still be on her feet. When it was explained to Salome that this birth was of God and not man, that it was immaculate and without pain, and that the Virgin Mother remained a Virgin after birth as she was before birth, Salome did not believe it, but rather she stretched out her hand to the body of the Most-holy Virgin to examine it, after the custom of a midwife, and to find out if this was indeed so. And because of her unbelief and insolence, a punishment befell her: her hand was seized and withered. The aged woman was greatly frightened by the miracle and lamented over her withered hand. However, when she touched the Divine Child later, her hand was restored to health like it was before. Thus, Salome believed in the virginity of the Most-pure Virgin Mary and in the Divinity of Christ. Thus after forty days, when according to custom the Most-pure Virgin came with the young Child to the Temple in Jerusalem, Zacharias the high priest placed her in the area reserved for virgins. The Pharisees and priests were disturbed by this and wanted to remove her to the place reserved for married women, but the discerning Zacharias did not allow this, claiming, that she was a virgin even though she had given birth. Because of

this, the Jewish elders hated Zacharias and sought from Herod that he be killed. Immediately after she left the Temple, the Theotokos and Joseph left from Jerusalem to Nazareth and then to Egypt.

Daily Scriptures

Slavic and Greek

- **Epistle:** Galatians 1:11-19

“ <11> But I make known to you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. <12> For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came through the revelation of Jesus Christ. <13> For you have heard of my former conduct in Judaism, how I persecuted the church of God beyond measure and tried to destroy it. <14> And I advanced in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries in my own nation, being more exceedingly zealous for the traditions of my fathers. <15> But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb and called me through His grace, <16> to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately confer with flesh and blood, <17> nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me; but I went to Arabia, and returned again to Damascus. <18> Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and remained with him fifteen days. <19> But I saw none of the other apostles except James, the Lord's brother.

- **Gospel:** Matthew 2:13-23

“ <13> Now when they had departed, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream, saying, "Arise, take the young Child and His mother, flee to Egypt, and stay there until I bring you word; for Herod will seek the young Child to destroy Him." <14> When he arose, he took the young Child and His mother by night and departed for Egypt, <15> and was there until the death of Herod, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying, "Out of Egypt I called My Son." <16> Then Herod, when he saw that he was deceived by the wise men, was exceedingly angry; and he sent forth and put to death all the male children who were in Bethlehem and in all its districts, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had determined from the wise men. <17> Then was fulfilled what was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet, saying: <18> "A voice was heard in Ramah, Lamentation, weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, Refusing to be comforted, Because they are no more." <19> Now when Herod was dead, behold, an angel

of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, <20> saying, "Arise, take the young Child and His mother, and go to the land of Israel, for those who sought the young Child's life are dead." <21> Then he arose, took the young Child and His mother, and came into the land of Israel. <22> But when he heard that Archelaus was reigning over Judea instead of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there. And being warned by God in a dream, he turned aside into the region of Galilee. <23> And he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, "He shall be called a Nazarene."

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