



St. Alexander Nevsky Orthodox Cathedral

2nd Sunday of Pascha. St. Thomas Sunday.
Epistle: Acts 5:12-20
Gospel: St. John 20:19-31
Hieromartyr Antipas, Bishop of Pergamum.

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Sunday, April 11, 2010

This Week's Announcements

- Be sure to pray for the safe return of our Nevsky Warriors basketball teams, who will be returning to Pittsburgh today after the FOCA National Basketball Tournament.

Thursday – April 15

- Adult Choir rehearsal – 7:30 pm

Saturday – April 17

- Vespers – 5:00 pm

Next Sunday – April 18

- Church School – 9:00 am
- Divine Liturgy – 10:00 am
- Junior Choir
- Parish Council
- “He Granted Life: Songs of Pascha” – Choral program presented by the Byzantine Catholic Archeparchy of Pittsburgh – 3 pm at the Byzantine Catholic Cathedral of St. John the Baptist, 210 Greentree Road in Munhall. Our choir will be participating. Check out the monthly newsletter for further details.

Coming Events – Mark Your Calendar!

- Basket Party – May 1
- Women's Association Tea Party – May 22

Fundability Tip of the Week: Now that Spring is upon us, it's time to do some of those indoor and outdoor chores. Remember, whatever supplies you need, you can purchase them with gift cards from St. Alexander Fundability. For example, if you need to replace that hard-to-start lawnmower, use Fundability cards to buy one from Sears, Lowe's, Home Depot, Kmart, or Wal-Mart. And pick up a restaurant card to use when the job's done! Remember, Fundability is your way to support the building fund without paying a penny extra. All you do is purchase cards for your favorite store and use them instead of money when you shop. Thanks for your ongoing support of this important fundraiser!

Today's Dynamis meditation is from the 4th Vigil Reading of Great and Holy Saturday

A Reluctant Prophet IV: Jonah 4:1-11 SAAS, especially vs. 3: “And *now*, Master, Lord, take my life from me, for it is better for me to die than to live.” In this final chapter of Jonah, the flaw in the character of the son of Amittai is now fully exposed. We see a dark bitterness in the heart of God's reluctant Prophet. He fled rather than preach in the Assyrian city of Nineveh. God forgave him for disobedience, and saved him from drowning by sending a great creature to swallow him, and then cast him up onto dry land miraculously. After all that, Jonah went to Nineveh where God blessed his preaching with success. Still he was angry, sullen, and grieved.

Thus the Book of Jonah is a warning - not to fall into the error of Jonah. While God relented from His need to overthrow Nineveh when He saw that the people of the city had “...turned back from their evil ways...” (Jon. 3:10), yet Jonah - as the opening line of this chapter says, “...was deeply grieved, and troubled” (Jon. 4:1). Strange that a man so blessed by God should be distressed and so very completely so, when his mission was accomplished so well.

Let us then examine the opening language of chapter four, especially the verbs, *lupe* and *synecho*. While *lupe* may express grief, it also may suggest “vexation” and “anger.” Similarly *synecho* may mean either “confusion” or “frustration.” The versions based on the Hebrew text strongly favor “angry frustration.” Hence, the Revised Standard Version has, “...it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was angry” (vs. 1) - yes, annoyed and petulant, because the result of his preaching was not to his liking. Our Septuagint text describes the Prophet climbing the hill to keep his watch “...opposite it...until he might observe what would happen to the city” (vs. 5). Above all, remember that he went up, sat down, and grumbled.

Jonah's anger was obvious in his scolding of God: “...I saw the need to flee to Tarshish; because I knew You to be compassionate and merciful, long-suffering and abundant in mercy, and willing to change your heart concerning evils” (vs. 2). We might elaborate his railing against the Lord: “So, of course, You forgave them! How could You forgive the Ninevites, of all people?” Jonah had neither love nor compassion for the Ninevites - but God did.

The disgruntled Prophet reflected a common view of the people of Israel in the eighth century BC who repeatedly had chafed under the subjugating effects of the encroaching power of the Assyrian empire. His outburst matches the Psalmist's cry to God: “Lift up Thy hands against their pride at the end, against the things which the enemy hath wickedly done in Thy holy place....How long, O God, shall the enemy utter reproach?” (Ps. 73:4,11).

The vignette of the gourd shading the Prophet that then withers when eaten by a worm reinforces the emerging portrait of bitterness (Jon. 4:6-10). Observe Jonah: he flees to Tarshish to avoid any potential for complicity in God's compassion, mercy, and forgiveness toward the Assyrians, whom he finds utterly repugnant. Even when he himself receives God's compassion and mercy, and after he submits and preaches as God instructs him (Jon. 3:1-11), still he clings to his loathing of Assyrians. Finally, God makes His message explicit: “...shall I Myself not take pity upon Nineveh, the great city, in which dwell more than one hundred and twenty thousand people who do not know either their right hand or their left - and many livestock?” (Jon. 4:11).

The Lord directs us to forgive them that hate us. Thus, Saint Gregory of Nyssa asks, “Do you want your debts to be forgiven by God? Forgive them yourself, and God will ratify it. For your judgment of your neighbor, which is in your power, will call forth the corresponding sentence upon you. What you decide for yourself will be confirmed by the Divine Judgment.”

Our Father, forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.