



## **Holy Ghost Orthodox Church**

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### **NATIVITY FAST—SAINT PHILIP'S FAST**

**ON THE MEND:** Please keep the following parishioners and others in your prayers for recovery from their illnesses and injuries: Metropolitan Constantine, Bishop Robert, Father Peter Natishan, Father Gerald Olszewski, Father Jakiw Norton, Father Dragan Filipović, Father Elias Katras, Father Stevo Rocknage, Father Paul Stoll, Father Igor Soroka, Father Michael Mihalick [MS], Father Joseph Kopchak, Father Anthony Dimitri, Father Cuthbert Jack, Father Elias Warnke, Evelyn Burlack, Joshua Agosto and his family, Harley Katarina Rahuba, Mike Holupka, Eva Malesnick, Helen Likar, Stella Peanoske, Joe Nezolyk, Nick Behun, Grace Holupka, Virginia Bryan, Joseph Sliwinsky, Maria Balo, Linda Mechtly, Mary Mochnick, Mildred Manolovich, Evelyn Misko, Jeanne Boehing, Alex Drobot, Rachelle, Jane Golofski, Doug Diller, Harry Krewsun, Glen Lucas Burlack, Bernie Vangrin, Mary Alice Babcock, Dorie Kunkle, Andrea, & Melissa [Betty O'Masta's relatives], Mary Evelyn King, Stella Cherepko, Sam Wadrose, Cameron [a boy in Matt's class], Faith—an 7-year-old girl with rheumatoid arthritis, Isabella Olivia Lindgren—a 4-year-old with a brain tumor, Dillon, Ethel Thomas, Donna, Nick Malec [Maxine's brother], Erin, Jim Markovich, Jeff Walewski [thyroid cancer], Carol [Lotinski] Rose, Michael Miller, Dave May, Grace & Owen Ostrasky, Alverta, Gary Zurasky, Michael Horvath, Patti Sinecki, David Genshi, Sue Segeleon, Mike Gallagher, Michael Miller, Jim Logue—throat cancer, Liz Stumpf, Ester Tylavsky, Ed Jamison, Theodore Nixon, Charles Johnson, Amy Forbeck, Michelle Corba Kapeluck, Gloria Prymak [Liz's niece], Robert Hippert & family, Margaret Vladimir, Luke Emmerling, John Sheliga, Sabrina, George & Mika Rocknage, Elizabeth Mitchell, Robert McKivitz, Marjorie Pershing, Tom Marriott, Joe Farkas, Liz Obradovich, Liz, Halyna Zelinska [Bishop Daniel's mother], Charlotte, Peter Natishan, Andrew Mark Olynyk, Deborah Finley, Claire Senita, Brandi Thomas, Eleanor Kelly, Bryan, Peter & Karen Special, Amy Boe, Doris Artman, Maureen Sams, Nancy Barylak, Shirley Tkacik, Carol Kowalcheck, Martin Golofski, Joe Paouncic, Anthony Yerace, Joanne Brodrick, Khrystyna Chorniy, Anthony Cormier [3-year-old with cancer], Diane Waryanka, Nathan Forbeck, Joseph Baloga, Andy Torick, Sarah Doyle, Carmella Berardesca, Samuel Peters, Jean Stutchell, Joe

Paouncic, Bonnie Blair [Pani Gina's mother], Charles & Esther Holupka, Jill Paha, and Daria Masur. ARNOLD: Stefania Lucci, Steve Sakal, Homer Paul Kline, and Steve Ostaffy. We pray that God will grant them all a speedy recovery.

**2010 Envelopes are now available downstairs in the church hall. PLEASE NOTE—your number may be different from this year's envelopes! Please put your name on the new envelopes when you start using them AFTER January 1, 2010! Any questions—please see Fr. Bob.**

**Happy Birthday to our December babies:** Scot Brunermer on the 14<sup>th</sup>, Joe Nezolyk on the 15<sup>th</sup>, Donna Karas on the 18<sup>th</sup>, and Jean Stuchell on the 29<sup>th</sup>. May God grant them all Many Happy, Healthy, Prosperous, and Blessed Years!

Please remember James John Logue George Senita, & John Kirkowski assigned to Iraq, Matthew Machak, Tonia Dec, Michael Repasky, and ALL American servicemen and women in the Middle East in your prayers. May God watch over them and all American servicemen and women—and bring them all home safely!

PLEASE REMEMBER TO BRING YOUR "BOXTOPS FOR EDUCATION" AND CAMPBELL'S SOUP LABELS TO CHURCH. There is a shoebox in the basement for Alex's Seventh Grade and Matt's Fifth Grade collections. THANK YOU ALL FOR YOUR HELP! Love, *Alex and Matt*

**REMEMBER—PRAYERS ARE ALWAYS FREE!**

**Communion Fasting:** nothing to eat or drink after midnight, EXCEPT in cases where your doctor tells you to eat or drink something for medical reasons: medication, diabetes, etc. If you have a question, please call Father Bob.

AT ANY TIME—if there is an emergency, if you have questions, or if you just need to talk, please **CALL FATHER BOB** at [412] 279-5640.

**Schedule of Services**

Sunday, December 20

Divine Liturgy

10:30 AM

28<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

SAINT AMBROSE-BISHOP OF MILAN, MARTYR ATENDODORUS OF MESOPOTAMIA, VENERABLE PAUL THE OBEDIENT, VENERABLE JOHN THE FASTER OF PERCHEVSKY LAVRA, VENERABLE NILUS-MONK OF STOLOBENSK, VENERABLE ANTHONY-ABBOT OF SIYA MONASTERY, VENERABLE GREGORY THE SILENT OF MOUNT ATHOS

Tone 3  
Colossians 1:12-18  
Luke 17:12-19

*Litany in Blessed Memory of Helen Pytlak—Darlene Santia*  
*Parastas in Blessed Memory of Nicholas & Catherine Behun—Behun Family*

**Sunday, December 27**                      **Divine Liturgy**                      **10:30 AM**  
**29<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST—SUNDAY OF THE HOLY FOREFATHERS**  
**MARTYRS THYRSUS, LEUCIUS, & CALLINICUS OF APOLLONIA, MARTYRS APOLLONIUS, PHILEMON, ARIANUS, &**  
**THEOCTYCHUS OF ALEXANDRIA**

Tone 4  
Colossians 3:4-11  
Luke 14:16-24

*Litany in Blessed Memory of Sam Kerr—Evelyn Burlack*  
*Parastas in Blessed Memory of Joseph Yakim, Eva P. Thompson, & John Pendlyshok—Ollie*

**Sunday, January 3**                      **Divine Liturgy**                      **10:30 AM**  
**30<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST—SUNDAY BEFORE THE NATIVITY OF CHRIST**  
**SUNDAY OF THE HOLY FATHERS**

Tone 5  
Hebrews 11:9-10, 17-23, 32-40  
Matthew 1:1-25

*Litany in Blessed Memory of Stephen Kuzman & Nicholas Vetosky—Fr. Bob*  
*Parastas in Blessed Memory of Robert Vetosky—Cindy Vetosky & Family*

**Wednesday, January 6**                      **GRAND COMPLINE AND HOLY SUPPER**                      **6:00 PM**

**Thursday, January 7**                      **Obednitza**                      **10:30 AM**  
**NATIVITY OF OUR LORD, GOD, AND SAVIOR JESUS CHRIST**

## **BULLETIN INSERT FOR 20 DECEMBER 2009**

### **TWENTY-EIGHTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST**

**SAINT AMBROSE-BISHOP OF MILAN, MARTYR ATENDODORUS OF  
MESOPOTAMIA, VENERABLE PAUL THE OBEDIENT, VENERABLE JOHN  
THE FASTER OF PERCHEVSKY LAVRA, VENERABLE NILUS-MONK OF  
STOLOBENSK, VENERABLE ANTHONY-ABBOT OF SIYA MONASTERY,  
VENERABLE GREGORY THE SILENT OF MOUNT ATHOS**

#### **TROPARION—TONE 3**

Let the Heavens rejoice! Let the earth be glad!  
For the Lord has shown strength with His arm!  
He has trampled down death by death!  
He has delivered us from the depths of hell,  
And has granted the world great mercy!

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, Now and ever, and  
unto ages of ages. Amen.

#### **KONTAKION—TONE 3**

On this day Thou didst rise from the tomb, O Merciful One!  
Leading us from the gates of death.  
On this day Adam exults as Eve rejoices;  
With the prophets and patriarchs

They unceasingly praise the divine majesty of Thy power!

**PROKEIMENON—TONE 3**

**READER:** Sing praises to our God, sing praises! Sing praises to our King, sing praises!

**PEOPLE: Sing praises to our God, sing praises! Sing praises to our King, sing praises!**

**READER:** Clap your hands, all peoples! Shout to God with loud songs of joy!

**PEOPLE: Sing praises to our God, sing praises! Sing praises to our King, sing praises!**

**READER:** Sing praises to our God, sing praises!

**PEOPLE: Sing praises to our King, sing praises!**

**ALLELUIA VERSES—TONE 3**

In Thee, O Lord, have I hoped; let me never be put to shame!

Be Thou a God of protection for me, a house of refuge, in order to save me!

**ALWAYS BELIEVE in MIRACLES!!**

Three years ago, a little boy and his grandmother came to see Santa at Mayfair Mall in Wisconsin. The child climbed up on his lap, holding a picture of a little girl. "Who is this?" asked Santa, smiling. "Your friend? Your sister?"

"Yes, Santa," he replied. "My sister, Sarah, who is very sick," he said sadly. Santa glanced over at the grandmother who was waiting nearby, and saw her dabbing her eyes with a tissue.

"She wanted to come with me to see you, oh, so very much, Santa!" the child exclaimed. "She misses you," he added softly.

Santa tried to be cheerful and encouraged a smile to the boy's face, asking him what he wanted Santa to bring him for Christmas. When they finished their visit, the Grandmother came over to help the child off his lap, and started to say something to Santa, but halted.

"What is it?" Santa asked warmly.

"Well, I know it's really too much to ask you, Santa, but ." the old woman began, shooing her grandson over to one of Santa's elves to collect the little gift which Santa gave all his young visitors. "The girl in the photograph ... my granddaughter .. well,

you see ... she has leukemia and isn't expected to make it even through the holidays," she said through tear-filled eyes. "Is there any way, Santa ... any possible way that you could come see Sarah? That's all she's asked for, for Christmas, is to see Santa."

Santa blinked and swallowed hard and told the woman to leave information with his elves as to where Sarah was, and he would see what he could do.

Santa thought of little else the rest of that afternoon. He knew what he had to do. "What if it were MY child lying in that hospital bed, dying," he thought with a sinking heart, "this is the least I can do."

When Santa finished visiting with all the boys and girls that evening, he retrieved from his helper the name of the hospital where Sarah was staying.

He asked the assistant location manager how to get to Children's Hospital.

"Why?" Rick asked, with a puzzled look on his face.

Santa relayed to him the conversation with Sarah's grandmother earlier that day. "C'mon...I'll take you there," Rick said softly.

Rick drove them to the hospital and came inside with Santa. They found out which room Sarah was in. A pale Rick said he would wait out in the hall.

Santa quietly peeked into the room through the half-closed door and saw little Sarah on the bed. The room was full of what appeared to be her family; there was the Grandmother and the girl's brother he had met earlier that day. A woman whom he guessed was Sarah's mother stood by the bed, gently pushing Sarah's thin hair off her forehead. And another woman who he discovered later was Sarah's aunt, sat in a chair near the bed with weary, sad look on her face. They were talking quietly, and Santa could sense the warmth and closeness of the family, and their love and concern for Sarah.

Taking a deep breath, and forcing a smile on his face, Santa entered the room, bellowing a hearty, "Ho, ho, ho!"

"Santa!" shrieked little Sarah weakly, as she tried to escape her bed to run to him, IV tubes in tact.

Santa rushed to her side and gave her a warm hug. A child the tender age of his own son—9 years old—gazed up at him with wonder and excitement.

Her skin was pale and her short tresses bore telltale bald patches from the effects of chemotherapy. But all he saw when he looked at her was a pair of huge, blue eyes. His heart melted, and he had to force himself to choke back tears. Though his eyes were riveted upon Sarah's face, he could hear the gasps and quiet sobbing of the women in the room. As he and Sarah began talking, the family crept quietly to the bedside one by one, squeezing Santa's shoulder or his hand gratefully, whispering "thank you" as they gazed sincerely at him with shining eyes. Santa and Sarah talked and talked, and she told him excitedly all the toys she wanted for Christmas, assuring him she'd been a very good girl that year. As their time together dwindled, Santa felt led in his spirit to pray for Sarah, and asked for permission from the girl's mother. She nodded in agreement and the entire family circled around Sarah's bed, holding hands. Santa looked intensely at Sarah and asked her if she believed in angels.

"Oh, yes, Santa ... I do!" she exclaimed.

"Well, I'm going to ask that angels watch over you," he said. Laying one hand on the child's head, Santa closed his eyes and prayed. He asked that God touch little Sarah, and heal her body from this disease. He asked that angels minister to her, watch and keep her. And when he finished praying, still with eyes closed, he started singing softly, "Silent Night, Holy Night... all is calm, all is bright." The family joined in, still holding hands, smiling at Sarah, and crying tears of hope, tears of joy for this moment, as Sarah beamed at them all. When the song ended, Santa sat on the side of the bed again and held Sarah's frail, small hands in his own.

"Now, Sarah," he said authoritatively, "you have a job to do, and that is to concentrate on getting well. I want you to have fun playing with your friends this summer, and I expect to see you at my house at Mayfair Mall this time next year!" He knew it was risky proclaiming that, to this little girl who had terminal cancer, but he "had" to. He had to give her the greatest gift he could—not dolls or games or toys—but the gift of HOPE.

"Yes, Santa!" Sarah exclaimed, her eyes bright.

He leaned down and kissed her on the forehead and left the room. Out in the hall, the minute Santa's eyes met Rick's, a look passed between them and they wept unashamed. Sarah's mother and grandmother slipped out of the room quickly and rushed to Santa's side to thank him.

"My only child is the same age as Sarah," he explained quietly. "This is the least I could do." They nodded with understanding and hugged him.

One year later, Santa Mark was again back on the set in Milwaukee for his six-week, seasonal job which he so loves to do. Several weeks went by and then one day a child came up to sit on his lap. "Hi, Santa! Remember me?!"

"Of course, I do," Santa proclaimed (as he always does), smiling down at her.

After all, the secret to being a "good" Santa is to always make each child feel as if they are the "only" child in the world at that moment.

"You came to see me in the hospital last year!" Santa's jaw dropped.

Tears immediately sprang in his eyes, and he grabbed this little miracle and held her to his chest. "Sarah!" he exclaimed. He scarcely recognized her, for her hair was long and silky and her cheeks were rosy—much different from the little girl he had visited just a year before. He looked over and saw Sarah's mother and grandmother in the sidelines smiling and waving and wiping their eyes.

That was the best Christmas ever for Santa Claus. He had witnessed –and been blessed to be instrumental in bringing about -- this miracle of hope. This precious little child was healed. Cancer-free. Alive and well.

He silently looked up to Heaven and humbly whispered, "Thank you, Father. 'Tis a very, Merry Christmas!"

Dear friends,

Several years ago, while I worked for the pharmaceutical company Pfizer, and at the request of Maria Nikolayevna Apraxina from Brussels, I sometimes visited a priest in Petersburg, whose son had leukaemia. He was being treated in a hospital with which I worked. The child died meantime. Memory eternal. I remember seeing that child cheerfully playing in the cemetery by his father's church, while he had a remission.

This priest gave me two flasks of an oil which came from a miraculous icon. Ever since, these flasks have been staying on a small shelf in a corner of our kitchen, with an icon of the mother of God, some industrial small icons brought back from various monasteries, and a paper reproduction of the icon of Emperor Nicolas II, another copy of which had given myrrh in Irina Georgievna Pahlen's hands, while the icon itself was being venerated in our former Khram Pamyatnik in Brussels.

My wife has been using this oil from time to time for unctions. Since a while already, the flasks were almost half empty.

My grand-daughter, Anastasia burned herself a few days ago and must be operated this morning (I ask your prayers). My daughter Alexandra, her mother, brought her to church yesterday and asked Father Nicholas to bless her for today's procedure.

Yesterday night, my wife had taken some oil from our flasks to make a cross on a photograph of the child and had seen the alarmingly low level of oil. She told herself that she would have to use it more sparsely. In the kitchen, I told her how Father Nicholas anointed our grand-daughter.

My wife thinks of our flasks, this morning, and goes to take some more. She sees that they are full to the edge. Nobody of us poured any oil into these bottles. There is no trace of the slightest overflow, as there would necessarily have been if one of us had tried to fill these bottles from outside.

In Christ,

Vladimir Kozyreff

It was said that there were three friends who were not afraid of hard work. The first one chose to reconcile those who were fighting each other, as it is said, "Blessed are the peacemakers." The second one chose to visit the sick. The third went to live in prayer and stillness in the desert. Now in spite of all his labors, the first one could not make peace in all men's quarrels; and in his sorrow he went to him who was serving the sick, and he found him also disheartened, for he could not fulfill that commandment either. So they went together to see him who was living in the stillness of prayer. They told him their difficulties and begged him to tell them what to do. After a short silence, he poured some water into a bowl and said to them, "Look at the water," and it was disturbed. After a little while he said to them again, "Look how still the water is now," and as they looked into the water, they saw their own faces reflected in it as in a mirror. Then he said to his friends, "It is the same for those who live among men; disturbances prevent them from seeing their own faults. But when a man is still, especially in the desert, then he sees his failings."

A brother in a monastery was falsely accused of fornication and he arose and went to Abba Anthony. The brethren also came from the monastery to correct him and bring him back. They set about proving that he had done this thing, but he defended himself and denied that he had done anything of the kind. Now Abba Paphnutius, who is called Cephalus, happened to be there, and he told them this parable. "I have seen a man on the bank of the



river buried up to his knees in mud and some men came to give him a hand to help him out, but they pushed him further in up to his neck." Then Abba Anthony said this about Abba Paphnutius, "Here is a real man, who can care for souls and save them." All those present were pierced to the heart by the words of the old man and they asked forgiveness of the brother. So, admonished by the Fathers, they took the brother back to the monastery.

Antioch had another patriarch who was compassionate and merciful. His name was Alexander. One of his secretaries once stole some gold from him, fled in fear and came to the Thebaid in Egypt. He was found wandering around by the bloodthirsty barbarians of Egypt and of the Thebaid; they took him as a slave to the remotest corner of their land. When the godly Alexander heard about this, he ransomed him from captivity at a cost of eighty five pieces of gold. When the captive returned, the bishop was so loving and gentle with him that one of the inhabitants of the city once said, "There is nothing more profitable or advantageous than to sin against Alexander." On another occasion, one of the deacons slandered Alexander before all the clergy. But the godly Alexander prostrated himself before the man saying, "Brother, forgive me." John Moschus, Leimonarion (Spiritual Meadow) 43

When Abba Macarius was returning from the marsh to his cell one day carrying some palm leaves, he met the devil on the road with a scythe. The latter tried to strike at him, but in vain, and he said to him, "What is your power, Macarius, that makes me powerless against you? All that you do, I do, too. You fast; so do I. You keep vigil; and I do not sleep at all. I can think of only one thing in which you beat me." Abba Macarius asked what that was. The devil said, "Your humility. Surely because of that, I can do nothing against you."

This Simeon far surpassed all his contemporaries in virtue, and endured the discipline of a life on the top of a column from his earliest years. The occasion on which he was first elevated on the column, was the following: While still very young, he was roving about, sporting and bounding along the eminences of the mountain, and meeting with a panther, he throws his girdle round its neck, and with this kind of halter led the beast, beguiled of its ferocity, to his monastery. His preceptor, (John the Stylite) who himself occupied a column, observing the circumstance, enquired what he had got; to which he replied, that it was a cat. Conjecturing from this occurrence how distinguished the child would be for virtue, he took him up upon the column; and on this column, and on another, towering above the summit of

the mountain, he spent sixty-eight years; earning thereby the highest gifts of grace, in respect of the ejection of demons, the healing of every disease and malady, and the foresight of future things as if they were present.

*Evagrius Scholasticus, Ecclesiastical History 6.23*

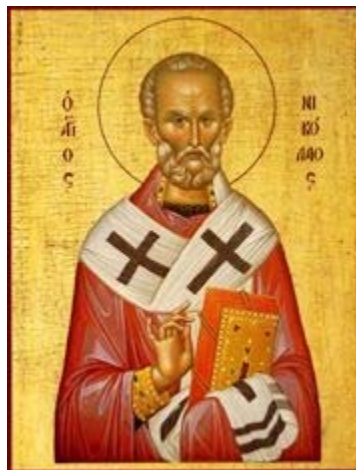
*St. Symeon Stylites the Younger, 521-597, commemorated 24 May*

Monk Nikandros the Konstamonitan was once asked, "Even though we daily read the biographies of saints and pious monks and do our rule of prayer, why don't we become like them?"

"When a metal worker wants to apply pewter on copper," he answered, "first he must scrape the copper clean and put it through fire. Unless the rust is removed, the pewter does not stick on copper. The same applies to us. We enter a monastery to become monks, but the rust we gathered while in the world comes with us. Thus until it is removed, God's grace does not come to sanctify and make us shine."

*from An Athonite Gerontikon*

### **Saint Nicholas the Wonderworker and Archbishop of Myra in Lycia**



Saint Nicholas, the Wonderworker, Archbishop of Myra in Lycia is famed as a great saint pleasing unto God. He was born in the city of Patara in the region of Lycia (on the south coast of the Asia Minor peninsula), and was the only son of pious parents Theophanes and Nonna, who had vowed to dedicate him to God.

As the fruit of the prayer of his childless parents, the infant Nicholas from the very day of his birth revealed to people the light of his future glory as a wonderworker. His mother, Nonna, after giving birth was immediately healed from illness. The newborn infant, while still in the baptismal font,

stood on his feet three hours, without support from anyone, thereby honoring the Most Holy Trinity. St. Nicholas from his infancy began a life of fasting, and on Wednesdays and Fridays he would not accept milk from his mother until after his parents had finished their evening prayers.

From his childhood Nicholas thrived on the study of Divine Scripture; by day he would not leave church, and by night he prayed and read books, making himself a worthy dwelling place for the Holy Spirit. Bishop Nicholas of Patara rejoiced at the spiritual success and deep piety of his nephew. He ordained him a reader, and then elevated Nicholas to the priesthood, making him his assistant and entrusting him to instruct the flock.

In serving the Lord the youth was fervent of spirit, and in his proficiency with questions of faith he was like an Elder, who aroused the wonder and deep respect of believers. Constantly at work and vivacious, in unceasing prayer, the priest Nicholas displayed great kind-heartedness towards the flock, and towards the afflicted who came to him for help, and he distributed all his inheritance to the poor.

There was a certain formerly rich inhabitant of Patara, whom St. Nicholas saved from great sin. The man had three grown daughters, and in desperation he planned to sell their bodies so they would have money for food. The saint, learning of the man's poverty and of his wicked intention, secretly visited him one night and threw a sack of gold through the window. With the money the man arranged an honorable marriage for his daughter. St. Nicholas also provided gold for the other daughters, thereby saving the family from falling into spiritual destruction. In bestowing charity, St. Nicholas always strove to do this secretly and to conceal his good deeds.

The Bishop of Patara decided to go on pilgrimage to the holy places at Jerusalem, and entrusted the guidance of his flock to St. Nicholas, who fulfilled this obedience carefully and with love. When the bishop returned, Nicholas asked his blessing for a pilgrimage to the Holy Land. Along the way the saint predicted a storm would arise and threaten the ship. St. Nicholas saw the devil get on the ship, intending to sink it and kill all the passengers. At the entreaty of the despairing pilgrims, he calmed the waves of the sea by his prayers. Through his prayer a certain sailor of the ship, who had fallen from the mast and was mortally injured was also restored to health.

When he reached the ancient city of Jerusalem and came to Golgotha, St. Nicholas gave thanks to the Savior. He went to all the holy places, worshiping at each one. One night on Mount Sion, the closed doors of the

church opened by themselves for the great pilgrim. Going round the holy places connected with the earthly service of the Son of God, St. Nicholas decided to withdraw into the desert, but he was stopped by a divine voice urging him to return to his native country. He returned to Lycia, and yearning for a life of quietude, the saint entered into the brotherhood of a monastery named Holy Sion, which had been founded by his uncle. But the Lord again indicated another path for him, "Nicholas, this is not the vineyard where you shall bear fruit for Me. Return to the world, and glorify My Name there." So he left Patara and went to Myra in Lycia.

Upon the death of Archbishop John, Nicholas was chosen as Bishop of Myra after one of the bishops of the Council said that a new archbishop should be revealed by God, not chosen by men. One of the elder bishops had a vision of a radiant Man, Who told him that the one who came to the church that night and was first to enter should be made archbishop. He would be named Nicholas. The bishop went to the church at night to await Nicholas. The saint, always the first to arrive at church, was stopped by the bishop. "What is your name, child?" he asked. God's chosen one replied, "My name is Nicholas, Master, and I am your servant."

After his consecration as archbishop, St. Nicholas remained a great ascetic, appearing to his flock as an image of gentleness, kindness and love for people. This was particularly precious for the Lycian Church during the persecution of Christians under the emperor Diocletian (284-305). Bishop Nicholas, locked up in prison together with other Christians for refusing to worship idols, sustained them and exhorted them to endure the fetters, punishment and torture. The Lord preserved him unharmed. Upon the accession of St. Constantine (May 21) as emperor, St. Nicholas was restored to his flock, which joyfully received their guide and intercessor.

Despite his great gentleness of spirit and purity of heart, St. Nicholas was a zealous and ardent warrior of the Church of Christ. Fighting evil spirits, the saint made the rounds of the pagan temples and shrines in the city of Myra and its surroundings, shattering the idols and turning the temples to dust.

In the year 325 St. Nicholas was a participant in the First Ecumenical Council. This Council proclaimed the Nicene Symbol of Faith, and he stood up against the heretic Arius with the likes of Sts. Sylvester the Bishop of Rome (January 2), Alexander of Alexandria (May 29), Spyridon of Trimythontos (December 12) and other Fathers of the Council.

St. Nicholas, fired with zeal for the Lord, assailed the heretic Arius with his words, and also struck him upon the face. For this reason, he was deprived of the emblems of his episcopal rank and placed under guard. But several of the holy Fathers had the same vision, seeing the Lord Himself and the Mother of God returning to him the Gospel and omophorion. The Fathers of the Council agreed that the audacity of the saint was pleasing to God, and restored the saint to the office of bishop.

Having returned to his own diocese, the saint brought it peace and blessings, sowing the word of Truth, uprooting heresy, nourishing his flock with sound doctrine, and also providing food for their bodies.

Even during his life the saint worked many miracles. One of the greatest was the deliverance from death of three men unjustly condemned by the Governor, who had been bribed. The saint boldly went up to the executioner and took his sword, already suspended over the heads of the condemned. The Governor, denounced by St. Nicholas for his wrong doing, repented and begged for forgiveness.

Witnessing this remarkable event were three military officers, who were sent to Phrygia by the emperor Constantine to put down a rebellion. They did not suspect that soon they would also be compelled to seek the intercession of St. Nicholas. Evil men slandered them before the emperor, and the officers were sentenced to death. Appearing to St. Constantine in a dream, St. Nicholas called on him to overturn the unjust sentence of the military officers.

He worked many other miracles, and struggled many long years at his labor. Through the prayers of the saint, the city of Myra was rescued from a terrible famine. He appeared to a certain Italian merchant and left him three gold pieces as a pledge of payment. He requested him to sail to Myra and deliver grain there. More than once, the saint saved those drowning in the sea, and provided release from captivity and imprisonment.

Having reached old age, St. Nicholas peacefully fell asleep in the Lord. His venerable relics were preserved incorrupt in the local cathedral church and flowed with curative myrrh, from which many received healing. In the year 1087, his relics were transferred to the Italian city of Bari, where they rest even now (See May 9).

The name of the great saint of God, the hierarch and wonderworker Nicholas, a speedy helper and suppliant for all hastening to him, is famed in

every corner of the earth, in many lands and among many peoples. In Russia there are a multitude of cathedrals, monasteries and churches consecrated in his name. There is, perhaps, not a single city without a church dedicated to him.

The first Russian Christian prince Askold (+ 882) was baptized in 866 by Patriarch Photius (February 6) with the name Nicholas. Over the grave of Askold, St. Olga (July 11) built the first temple of St. Nicholas in the Russian Church at Kiev. Primary cathedrals were dedicated to St. Nicholas at Izborsk, Ostrov, Mozhaisk, and Zarsk. At Novgorod the Great, one of the main churches of the city, the Nikolo-Dvorischensk church, later became a cathedral.

Famed and venerable churches and monasteries dedicated to St. Nicholas are found at Kiev, Smolensk, Pskov, Toropetsa, Galich, Archangelsk, Great Ustiug, Tobolsk. Moscow had dozens of churches named for the saint, and also three monasteries in the Moscow diocese: the Nikolo-Greek (Staryi) in the Chinese-quarter, the Nikolo-Perervinsk and the Nikolo-Ugreshsk. One of the chief towers of the Kremlin was named the Nikolsk.

Many of the churches devoted to the saint were those established at market squares by Russian merchants, sea-farers and those who traveled by land, venerating the wonderworker Nicholas as a protector of all those journeying on dry land and sea. They sometimes received the name among the people of "Nicholas soaked."

Many village churches in Russia were dedicated to the wonderworker Nicholas, venerated by peasants as a merciful intercessor before the Lord for all the people in their work. And in the Russian land St. Nicholas did not cease his intercession. Ancient Kiev preserves the memory about the miraculous rescue of a drowning infant by the saint. The great wonderworker, hearing the grief-filled prayers of the parents for the loss of their only child, took the infant from the waters, revived him and placed him in the choir-loft of the church of Holy Wisdom (Hagia Sophia) before his wonderworking icon. In the morning the infant was found safe by his thrilled parents, praising St. Nicholas the Wonderworker.

Many wonderworking icons of St. Nicholas appeared in Russia and came also from other lands. There is the ancient Byzantine embordered image of the saint, brought to Moscow from Novgorod, and the large icon painted in the thirteenth century by a Novgorod master.

Two depictions of the wonderworker are especially numerous in the Russian Church: St. Nicholas of Zارايسк, portrayed in full-length, with his right hand raised in blessing and with a Gospel (this image was brought to Ryazan in 1225 by the Byzantine Princess Eupraxia, the future wife of Prince Theodore. She perished in 1237 with her husband and infant son during the incursion of Batu); and St. Nicholas of Mozhaisk, also in full stature, with a sword in his right hand and a city in his left. This recalls the miraculous rescue of the city of Mozhaisk from an invasion of enemies, through the prayers of the saint. It is impossible to list all the grace-filled icons of St. Nicholas, or to enumerate all his miracles.

St. Nicholas is the patron of travelers, and we pray to him for deliverance from floods, poverty, or any misfortunes. He has promised to help those who remember his parents, Theophanes and Nonna.

St. Nicholas is also commemorated on May 9 (The transfer of his relics) and on July 29 (his nativity).