

# All About Thanksgiving

By Father Lawrence Farley

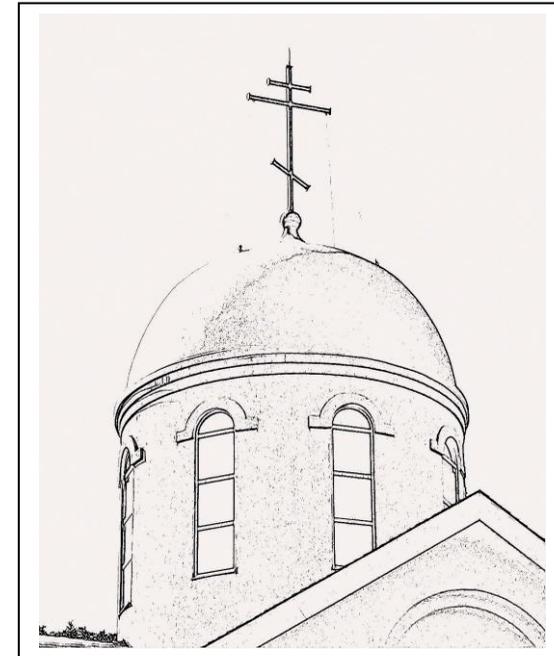
The Christian Faith is all about thanksgiving. Our secular North American society thinks that thanksgiving is moderately important, and so it has a wonderful Thanksgiving Day feast once a year. I love this feast. Every October in Canada—my calendar tells me it is held in November in the US—when the leaves start to turn colour and the days become a little cooler, we gather if possible with our extended families and sit down to a turkey dinner. There are no pilgrims and no Plymouth Rock in sight up north, but the rejoicing in family warmth and domestic coziness is the same, I suspect, both north and south of the border. I do love Thanksgiving Day, even if in many secular households not everyone gives thanks to God for the day's bounty. At least once a year our all-too-often self-entitled culture tells us that it is good to give thanks and to be grateful.

It is otherwise in the Church. In the Church, we are to give thanks not just once a year, but always, so that every day is a thanksgiving day. We are taught this at Vespers: "I will sing praises to my God while I have my being!" (from Psalm 104). We are taught this at Matins: "Let every breath praise the Lord!" (from the Praises). We are taught this at Divine Liturgy: "It is meet and right to hymn You, to bless You, to praise You, to give thanks to You, and to worship You in every place of Your dominion" (from the Anaphora). Praise and thanksgiving is what we do as Christians, not just once a year, but all day, every day. Obviously we don't do this as successfully as we should. That is why we need the constant liturgical reminders. But it defines our Christian Faith nonetheless. That is why the main liturgical service, the one that reconstitutes us each week as the Body of Christ and forms the liturgical context for everything else, is called "the Eucharist"—from the Greek eucharistia, thanksgiving.

Thanksgiving not only defines us as Christians, but also as human beings—not surprisingly, if the soul (as the second century Christian apologist Tertullian noted) is "naturally Christian." That is, what separates us from the animals is the ability to transcend ourselves and the realm of the senses and appetites through thanksgiving. My cat, lovely thing that she is, was not made in the image of God, and so cannot transcend the realm of the appetites and the senses in which she lives. She might love me (or might not; with cats it's sometimes hard to tell), but even if she does love me, she never expresses it in thanksgiving. When I fill her food dish, she never stops, looks up at me and meows a word of doxology or gratitude. She simply chows down as if I do not exist. That's okay. She's just an animal. But we are not just animals, but strange and glorious amalgams of the animal and the spiritual, a kind of amphibian, living in both of the physical world and the angelic realm. As such we can transcend the merely physical in which we usually live, and rise up to God. Man is, as Father Alexander Schmemmann once reminded us, homo adorans—"worshiping man"—and this capacity to worship is what constitutes the divine image in us.

Our annual secular reminder of this in the autumn is wonderful. Yet even more wonderful is our weekly reminder every Sunday. For there we are not simply reminded to give thanks, but through our weekly liturgical eucharistia are able to rise above the world, and commune with God, and find healing for our broken and ailing hearts. Family and turkey are great. The Kingdom of God is even better.

WEEKLY



BULLETIN

*Today is the beginning of our salvation, the revelation of the eternal mystery. The Son of God becomes the Son of the Virgin as Gabriel announces the coming of Grace. Together with him let us cry to the Theotokos: Rejoice O Full of Grace, the Lord is with you!*

*Troparion of the Annunciation to the Theotokos*

## ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN CHURCH OF THE ANNUNCIATION

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Very Rev. Fr. Gary Joseph Breton, *Rector*

Very Rev. Fr. Sergius Kuharsky, *Retired Attached Priest*

Very Rev. Fr. Paul Kucynda, *Retired Attached Priest*

Rev. Fr. Alexander Smida, *Attached Priest*

Rev. Fr. Michael Pejovic, *Attached Priest*

Tara Paxton, *Senior Warden*

Reader Matthew Hascha, *Choir Director*

November 22, 2020

## TWENTY-FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

### Afterfeast of the Entry Into the Temple

*Tone 7. Apostles of the Seventy Philemon and Archippus, Martyr Apphia, wife of Philemon and Equal-to-the-Apostles, and Onesimus, disciple of St. Paul (1st c.). Martyrdom of St. Michael, Prince of Tver' (1318). Rt. Blv. Yaropolk, in Baptism Peter, Prince of Vladimir in Volyn' (1086). Martyrs Cecilia, Valerian, Tiburtius, and Maximus, at Rome (ca. 230). Martyr Procopius the Reader, at Caesarea in Palestine (303). Martyr Menignus at Parium (250). St. Agabbas of Syria (5th c.). Righteous Michael the Soldier, of Bulgaria (866). Ven. Callistus Xanthopoulos (Mt. Athos—1363).*

#### **Today's Readings:**

*Epistle:* Ephesians 2:14-22

*Gospel:* Luke 12:16-21

#### **Upcoming Service Schedule:**

**Today @ 9am** Divine Liturgy

**Saturday @ 6pm** Great Vespers

**Sunday @ 9am** Divine Liturgy

#### **Next Sunday's Readings:**

*Epistle:* Ephesians 4:1-6

*Gospel:* Luke 13:10-17



*Entry of the Most-holy  
Theotokos into the  
Temple*

*A Blessed Thanksgiving  
to all this Thursday!  
There is no official  
fasting dispensation  
from the Church on this  
secular holiday, but  
whatever we eat, may  
we offer it up to God in  
true thanksgiving for  
all His many blessings!*

Keep up on OCA news by visiting [www.oca.org](http://www.oca.org), diocesan news and directives by visiting [www.nynjoca.org](http://www.nynjoca.org), and parish news by visiting [www.orthodoxbrick.org](http://www.orthodoxbrick.org).

## Special Prayers

We pray for **all** our parish family members, but we pray especially for those who are ill and afflicted. Among them are: **Betty James, Manya Shark, Deryl Tczap, Rdr. John Economou, Margaret Makara, Tom Collins, Tom Kopec, Ann Marie Gahr, Dennis Gahr, Dorothy Studier, Helen Ciurczak (under hospice care), Pauline Barnowsky, Fr. Alexander Smida, and Catherine Ratushnuk.**

*The Distinguished Diocesan Benefactors program is an essential vehicle for funding the activities and programs of our diocese. Please consider participating in the program. Brochures are located by the bulletin board in the parish hall or at the diocesan website at [www.nynjoca.org](http://www.nynjoca.org).*

## Annunciations

**TODAY** – We are continuing a modified and controlled **Coffee Hour** ministry. The Parish Hall is set up to accommodate social distancing. Masks are required when traveling around the hall, but not when sitting and partaking of the refreshments. The hall will be sanitized after the Coffee Hour.

**TODAY** – The **Church School** program continues with classes held for the teens of our parish after Divine Liturgy. **Next Sunday**, there will be no Church School.

We are in the midst of the **Nativity Fast**, the time that prepares us for the Son of God's coming into the world as fully God and fully man. Please take advantage of this gift that the Church presents to us. We are called to refrain from meat and dairy products during this period, but on some days, fish, wine, and oil are allowed. Please consult your parish wall calendars for days on which those allowances occur.

**THIS WEDNESDAY** – A **group of inquirers** will meet at 7:00pm in the Parish Hall. We will discuss **essential teachings of the Orthodox Faith**. All safety precautions and preventative actions will be taken. All are welcome. Please contact Father Gary if you are interested.

**NEXT SUNDAY** – **Group 1** is invited to attend Divine Liturgy.

Please continue to sign up online for **Great Vespers and weekday Divine Liturgy**. These services are filled on a first-come-first-served basis.

**Confessions** continue to be offered either by phone or in person (with proper social distancing). Please **contact Father Gary** to make an appointment for the Sacrament of Confession.

**Grocery Gift Cards** are available for purchase. Please contact Matushka Mary by email ([matmaryb@gmail.com](mailto:matmaryb@gmail.com)) or by phone at (848) 333-7075 to make arrangements.

Stewardship Donations may be brought to the church or mailed to the church address: 360 Van Zile Road, Brick, NJ 08724. On-line donations are possible by visiting our website for a link. Many thanks for continuing to support your parish in these challenging times.

## **MANY YEARS**

### **Birthdays this week:**

*Wednesday* – Catherine Ratushnuk

*Saturday* – Victorianna Vessio

### **Wedding Anniversaries this week:**

*Wednesday* – Richard & Olga Pasick

(#36)

As part of our Grocery Gift Card Aid program, \$1,000 in gift cards were distributed last week to local agencies that provide assistance to those in need. Both the **Brick Senior Outreach Services** and **St. Gregory's Pantry** received \$500 in gift cards. Many thanks to those who are participating in this parish outreach program by making cash donations.