

The Gospel's Voice



Orthodox Parish of the Holy Transfiguration

Number 25, December 2017

Christmas: How do we look at this feast?

In the Gospel, Jesus addresses the rich by exhorting them to sell their goods to give the money to the poor and to follow him (Luke 18: 18-30; Luke 16: 19-31). To the poor, he asks to put their trust in Divine Providence and not to worry about what they will eat or what they will dress with: to the birds, does not God give food, and are not the flowers covered by Him in splendid ways? (Luke 12 / 22-31)

To the Pharisees, Jesus does not hesitate to use harsh language to denounce their hypocrisy. (Matthew 23 / 13-28)

To his disciples, Jesus explains in detail the meaning of the parables he uses in his preaching.

Finally, Jesus addressing the crowds who came to hear him will say the well-known Beatitudes:

"Blessed are the poor, Blessed are the pure in hearts, etc." (Matthew 5 / 1-12)

Our Lord invites us to change our view on people and things. To move from a "horizontal" perspective, materialistic, legalistic and selfish, to a "vertical" look turned to God and others with simplicity and love.

"You will love your God ... and your neighbor as yourself!" (Matthew 22: 34-40)

Christmas is coming!

Feast of hyper-consumption or meeting with the one who did not hesitate to join us in the weakness and poverty of a child? He who is God, the creator of all things, has become small and humble, in order to call us to follow him and go to the living and true God. In order to change our outlook on life, things and people. To give meaning to our lives. In short, to save us and tear us away from vanity (= emptiness) to allow us to live in communion with the God of love.

We fast and pray to prepare ourselves to live the feast of the Nativity. Let's turn away from our concerns: what gift will I receive, what meal will I eat? We live in a materialistic world, a consumer society where everything is focused on money and pleasure: it is the horizontal gaze. We must learn to resist this in order to find a vertical look: when Jesus prayed he raised his eyes to heaven (Matthew 14/19) or was throwing his face to the ground (Matthew 26/39) because praying is to seek communion with God, the creator, beyond the visible, above appearances, but also deep within ourselves knowing that we are temples of the Holy Spirit, places of residence of God.

To pray is to love God with all our heart, with all our intelligence, with our strength, with all our person and, thus, to experience the encounter with God who loves us.

How then do we not turn to others to share with them this love, how not to love our neighbor as ourselves we are loved by God?

This is how our "vertical" look will give real meaning to Christmas: sharing the peace, strength and joy that God alone gives.

P. Athanasios



GIVE ME THE SIMPLE LIFE

Satan called a worldwide convention. In his opening address to his evil angels, he said, "We can't keep the Christians from going to church. We can't keep them from reading their Bibles and knowing the truth. We can't even keep them from conservative values. But we can do something else. We can keep them from forming an intimate, abiding experience in Christ. If they gain that connection with Jesus, our power over them is broken. So let them go to church, let them have their conservative lifestyles, but steal their time, so they can't gain that experience in Jesus Christ. This is what I

want you to do, angels. Distract them from gaining hold of their Savior and maintaining that vital connection throughout the day."

"How shall we do this?", shouted his angels. "Keep them busy in the non-essentials of life and invent unnumbered schemes to occupy their minds," he answered. "Tempt them to spend, spend, spend, then, borrow, borrow, borrow. Convince the wives to go to work and the husbands to work 6 or 7 days a week, 10-12 hours a day, so they can afford their lifestyles. Keep them from spending time with their children. As their family fragments, soon, their homes will offer no escape from pressures of work."

"Over-stimulate their minds so that they cannot hear that still small voice. Entice them to play the radio or cassette player whenever they drive, to keep the TV, the VCR, and their CD's going constantly in their homes. And see to it that every store and restaurant in the world plays music constantly. This will jam their minds and break that union with Jesus Christ."

"Fill their coffee tables with magazines and newspaper. Pound their minds with the news 24 hours a day. Invade their driving moments with billboards. Flood their mailboxes with junk mail, sweepstakes, mail order catalogues, and every kind of newsletter and promotional, offering free products, services, and false hopes."

"Even in their recreation, let them be excessive. Have them return from their recreation exhausted, disquieted, and unprepared for the coming week. Don't let them go out in nature. Send them to amusement parks, sporting events, concerts and movies instead. And when they meet for spiritual fellowship, involve them in gossip and small talk so that they leave with troubled consciences and unsettled emotion."

"Let them be involved in soul-winning. But crowd their lives with so many good causes they have no time to seek power from Christ. Soon they will be working in their own strength, sacrificing their health and family unity for the good of the cause."

It was quite a convention in the end. And the evil angels went eagerly to their assignments causing Christians everywhere to get busy, busy, busy and rush here and there. Has the devil been successful at his scheme? You be the judge.



Divine Liturgy

Every Sunday at 9.30 a.m.

Sunday 3rd of December : St Zephaniah, prophet

10th : St Menas

17th : St Daniel, prophet, and the three young men

24th : *Liturgy of St John Chrysostome*

Monday 25th at 9h30 : **Nativity of our Lord, God and Savior**

Jesus Christ *Liturgy of St Basil*

31st: St Joseph, St David and St James brother of our Lord

Matins at 9.30 a.m. every week day.

The Orthodox Church of the Holy Transfiguration

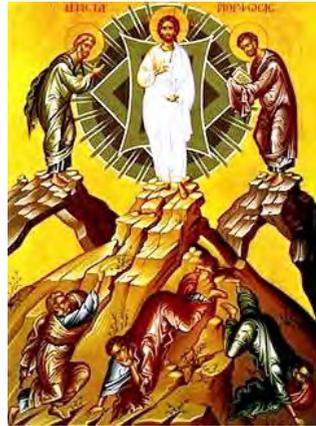
Grande-Rivière N-O
Mauritius
(behind Garage BALA)

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Sunday
at 9.30 a.m.**

Web site:

<http://orthodoxchurchmauritius.org>

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