

PRAYER OF AZARIAH

O Lord, the God of our Fathers, We praise and adore You; may Your name be honored forever. You have treated us as we deserve. In everything You have done to us You are always honest, and when You bring us to judgment, You are always fair... We come to You with repentant hearts and humble spirits. Accept our repentance as our sacrifice to You today, so that we may obey You with all of our hearts. No one who trusts You will ever be disappointed. Now with all of our hearts we promise to obey You and worship You. O Lord, treat us with kindness and mercy, let us never be put to shame; rescue us with Your mighty hand; bring honor to Your name. Let all people know that You alone are Lord and God and that You rule in majesty over the whole world.

Colossians 3:4-11 (*Epistle*)

When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory. Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. Because of these things the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience, in which you yourselves once walked when you lived in them. But now you yourselves are to put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth. Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds, and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him, where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised nor uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave nor free, but Christ is all and in all.

Luke 14:16-24 (*Gospel*)

Then He said to him, "A certain man gave a great supper and invited many, and sent his servant at supper time to say to those who were invited, 'Come, for all things are now ready.'

But they all with one accord began to make excuses. The first said to him, 'I have bought a piece of ground, and I must go and see it. I ask you to have me excused.' And another said, 'I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I am going to test them. I ask you to have me excused.' Still another said, 'I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.' So that servant came and reported these things to his master. Then the master of the house, being angry, said to his servant, 'Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in here the poor and the maimed and the lame and the blind.'

And the servant said, 'Master, it is done as you commanded, and still there is room.' Then the master said to the servant, 'Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled. 'For I say to you that none of those men who were invited shall taste my supper.'"

Sesame Street and its Impact on Learning Inside and Outside the Church

The upcoming live stream slated to be held on December 30, 2018 will focus on the topic, "Why can't Church be more fun?" We cannot discuss this without looking at the impact the show Sesame Street has had — and still has — on our lives today. Since the show made its debut in November 1969, several generations of people have been raised watching this program. As widely known, the show was designed to make learning fun and to engage children in the learning process through short musical bytes and skits with the help of the famous Muppets.

Today I see toddlers enthralled with watching the show on their parents' iPhones.

I don't know what to make of this. On the one hand, I am glad to see that toddlers and young children are learning — and finding it enjoyable. Perhaps it encourages them to fill their thirst for learning. But is the focus on learning or on the vehicle through which learning occurs? In other words, if it isn't fun, it isn't worth learning.

I grew watching Captain Kangaroo in the morning. I would call this show a milder version of Sesame Street. There was a fun, entertaining quality to it, but it wasn't relentless. I have fond memories hearing stories read to viewers of the *Five Chinese Brothers*, *Mike Mulligan and the Steam Shovel*, and *The Little Red Lighthouse*.

I think there are some aspects of learning that are not necessarily fun, that require self control and self discipline, especially when learning becomes difficult. I can't imagine a medical student learning anatomy to an upbeat tune sung by the Muppet Ernie. You may think this is a silly thought.

However, learning any habit in life is something that is done over time. There is no magical age when one can say, "Voila, I am now self disciplined!" So again I ask the question, is there a problem with this statement: "If it isn't fun, it isn't worth learning?" Is this an accurate observation on my part? What am I missing here? What do parents who grew up with Sesame Street think now that their kids are growing up on it? I will continue to discuss this topic next week.

The blessing of the Lord be upon you!
The unworthy +Paul

St. Romanos the Melodist and the Kontakion

By Fr. Steven Kostoff

According to the patristic scholar, Father Andrew Louth: “[Saint Romanos](#) (6th. c) is perhaps the most famous liturgical poet of the Orthodox Church, but his genius is such as to command a place among the highest ranks of poets, religious or secular, so that he has been called by Professor Trepanis “the greatest poet of the Greek middle ages.” I begin with this as a brief introduction to a small portion of one of his famous *kontakia* (singular *kontakion*) that I would like to share in preparation for the Great Feast of the Nativity. What we hear today under this title is a mere echo of the original structure of a kontakion. Again, citing Father Louth, “The verse form that Romanos raised to the highest perfection was the kontakion, a kind of chanted verse sermon, consisting of brief stanzas (each called an *ikos*), all of which end with the same refrain.” In other words, the kontakion was something of a long and elaborate theological poem that was most likely chanted after the Gospel “with the choir (and doubtless the congregation) joining in the refrain.”

The most famous of the many kontakia composed by Saint Romanos, was the one now known as the *Nativity Kontakion* that we will hear when the feast is celebrated. A pious tradition relates that the Mother of God appeared to him in a dream and gave him a scroll to swallow (see Ezekiel 2:8-3:3; Revelation 9:10-11). This was on Christmas Eve, and when he awoke he went to the church and chanted his famous *kontakion* in honor of the feast. What we sing in church to this day for the Great Feast of the Nativity is merely the *Prelude* that introduces a poetically structured hymn of 24 stanzas! Yet, brief as it may be, this is truly one of the greatest “Christmas hymns” ever to be composed for its theological depth:

Today the Virgin gives birth the Transcendent One, And the earth offers a cave to the unapproachable One! Angels, with shepherds, glorify Him! The wise men journey with the star! Since for our sake the eternal God was born as a little Child!

It is also most likely that Saint Romanos composed the incomparable *Akathistos Hymn to the Theotokos*, perhaps his greatest masterpiece, and a hymn chanted to this day in the church and in personal devotion.

One of the chief characteristics of his *kontakia* is the endlessly creative use of *typology* as a way of reading the Scriptures. Typology allows us to uncover, through persons, places, and even sacred objects, their role as prefigurations for their fulfillment in Christ. (In Romans 5:14, Saint Paul tells us that Adam was a “type” [in Greek, *typos*] of Christ). Through typological exegesis (biblical interpretation), the Burning Bush of Exodus 3 is a “type” of the Theotokos, who will hold within her womb the fiery Word of God, but not be consumed in the process. This is one of Saint Romanos’ favorite types from the Old

Testament. Therefore, just to pass on a “taste” of the rich poetic theology expressed by Saint Romanos in his *kontakia*, I am offering the *Prelude* and stanzas one and 13 of his *kontakion* on the Mother of God. We do not associate poetry and rich imagery with theology, but this is how some of the early Church Fathers expressed their deepest intuitions into the mystery of Christ. This is especially true of the Syriac tradition. (Saint Romanos was from Syria and journeyed eventually to make his home in Constantinople). Notice the refrain after each stanza. That must have made a strong impression on all of the worshippers present, when the choir or the entire congregation sang/chanted that repeatedly throughout the course of the hymn.

Prelude

At your conceiving without seed, O Mother of God, Joseph was struck with wonder as he contemplated what was beyond nature. And he brought to mind the rain on the fleece (Judges 6:3), The bush unburned by fire (Exodus 3:2-4), Aaron’s rod which blossomed (Numbers 17:23), And your betrothed and guardian bore witness and cried to the priests,

Refrain

A Virgin gives birth, and after childbirth remains still a virgin. What I see I cannot understand, for it surpasses the human mind. How is it that the grass carries fire and it not burned? A lamb carries a lion, a swallow an eagle and the servant her Master (Isaiah 11:6-8). In a mortal womb, in a manner uncircumscribed, Mary carries my Savior as He wills, So that everyone will say,

Refrain

A Virgin gives birth, and after childbirth remains still a virgin. So, Mary, sing the praise of Christ, Who is carried below in your bosom And on high is seated with the Father. He sucks at your breast and gives mortals divine food from above, And below He is laid in a cave through love of mortals,

Refrain

A Virgin gives birth, and after childbirth remains still a virgin. For anyone interested in pursuing these hymns further for their rich theology and use of the Scriptures, perhaps the best collection is in the [book compiled and edited by the late Archimandrite Ephraim](#), considered an excellent translator during his lifetime, in which I believe there are 18 *kontakia*.

Patronal feast celebrated at OCA’s St. Catherine’s Representation Church, Moscow

On December 7, 2018, the clergy and faithful of the Orthodox Church in America’s [Representation Church of the Great Martyr Catherine](#), Moscow, Russia, celebrated their patronal feast.

Representing His Beatitude, Metropolitan Tikhon, at the celebration was His Eminence, Archbishop Irénée of Ottawa and Canada. Presiding at the festal Divine Liturgy was His Eminence, Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk who, together with Archbishop Irénée, concelebrated with His Eminence, Metropolitan Niphon, Representative of the Patriarchate of Antioch to the Russian Orthodox Church; His Grace, Bishop Anthony of Moravic, Representative of the Patriarchate of Serbia to the Russian Orthodox Church; Archimandrite Seraphim, Representative of the Church of the Czech Lands and Slovakia; Protopresbyter Vladimir Divakov, Secretary of the Patriarch of Moscow; Archpriest Leonid Kalinin; Archpriest Daniel Andreiuk, Dean of Saint Catherine’s Church and OCA Representative to the Russian Orthodox Church; Archpriest Christopher Hill; Priest Nikolai Svetlovsky of Canada; Protodeacon Alexey Trunin; and Deacons Alexander Ershov, Dmitry Asratyan, and Kirill Dotsenko.

Representatives of the US and Canadian embassies—Anthony Godfrey, Deputy Chief of Mission at the US Embassy in Moscow, and Stefan Zhoben, Deputy Head of the Mission of the Canadian Embassy—also were present, as was the Apostolic Nuncio in Russia, Archbishop Celestino Migliore.

After the Divine Liturgy, Metropolitan Hilarion congratulated the parish’s clergy and faithful on their patronal feast and shared his fondness for the community, at which he had served from 1996 through 2001. He emphasized how Saint Catherine was a model of tenacity of spirit and loyalty to Christ, and how these same virtues must be manifest in the daily life of all Orthodox Christians.

As a memento of the occasion, the clergy and faithful of Saint Catherine’s Church presented an icon of Saint Catherine and Saint John of Shanghai and San Francisco to Metropolitan Hilarion. Gramoti signed by Metropolitan Tikhon also were presented to several parish benefactors in gratitude for their dedication to the community.

On December 6, the eve of the feast, the All-Night Vigil and the Akathistos Hymn in honor of Saint Catherine were celebrated by Archbishop Irénée, together with Fathers Daniel and Christopher, Priests Andrei Tregubov and Pavel Zuev, and several deacons.

Greeting of His Beatitude, Metropolitan Tikhon on the Patronal Feast of the Great Martyr Catherine Representation Church of Saint Catherine, Moscow, Russia

The commemoration each year of Saint Catherine the Great Martyr is a joyful feast for the Orthodox Church in America’s Saint Catherine’s Representation Church in Moscow. This day is a vivid sign of the spiritual unity and eucharistic communion between the Holy Church of Russia and the Orthodox Church in America.

Today we are witnessing a time of tension between the United States and Russia, to some extent returning our nations to old habits and suspicions. In relations among Orthodox Churches globally there is also controversy and alienation. It is all the more important to lift up every possible sign and experience of good will. In doing so today, we fervently pray for the “peace of the whole world and the welfare of God’s holy churches.”

On behalf of the Holy Synod of the Orthodox Church in America I extend cordial greetings to the Dean of Saint Catherine’s Church, Archpriest Daniel Andrejuk, and the priests of the parish. I also warmly welcome the members of the diplomatic community in Moscow and wish them much success in their honorable labors to strengthen mutual understanding and peace in our troubled world. To the parishioners of Saint Catherine’s Church and all those gathered today, I extend my blessing in the words of the Divine Liturgy itself—may “the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with all of you.”

+ Tikhon
Archbishop of Washington
Metropolitan of All America and Canada

DECEMBER

	Cleaners	Readers	Social
2	Laura	Wayne	<i>NO SOCIAL</i>
9	Joe & Sonya	Wayne	Stephanie K
16	Sandy	Tim	Rachel A
23	Wayne	Natalie	Jean H
30	Matthew A.	Ron	OPEN

Pledge Cards

Please turn in your pledge cards next Sunday, December 23rd!

Thank you!





A Sunday school teacher asked her children as they were on the way to church service, "And why is it necessary to be quiet in church?" One bright little girl replied, "Because people are sleeping."



Six-year-old Angie and her four-year-old brother, Joel, were sitting together in church. Joel giggled, sang, and talked out loud. Finally, his big sister had had enough.

"You're not supposed to talk out loud in church."

"Why? Who's going to stop me?" Joel asked.

Angie pointed to the back of the church and said, "See those two men standing by the door? They're hushers."



One particular four-year-old prayed, "And forgive us our trash baskets as we forgive those who put trash in our baskets."

A mother was preparing pancakes for her sons, Kevin 5, and Ryan 3. The boys began to argue over who would get the first pancake. Their mother saw the opportunity for a moral lesson. "If Jesus were sitting here, He would say, 'Let my brother have the first pancake, I can wait.'"

Kevin turned to his younger brother and said, "Ryan, you be Jesus!"



PREPARATION FOR THE BLESSING OF HOMES

Before the Priest arrives at your home, here are a few reminders on how to prepare:

- In the main room of the home, usually the kitchen or dining room, have placed on the table a white cloth, a candle and /or an Icon or cross. You may place a small container of Holy Water on the table. (Note: Father will be bringing his own.)
- Make a list of those living in the house including pets and all deceased you want prayed for.
- Turn off all TV's, radios, computers, etc. So as to keep focused on the blessing service.
- Make sure that pets are heeled or restrained so as not to get underfoot while Father goes through the home.
- In some customs, someone (usually a child) takes a candle and leads Father through the house while the rest follow.
- If you have any items to be blessed (Icon, Cross, etc.). Put them on the table where the blessing will take place.
- When the priest arrives, have everyone in the home gather around the table and join in the blessing. PARTICIPATION IS IMPORTANT.
- Invite friends or neighbors to participate and witness the beauty of this tradition.

NOTE: Remember, the invitation to the priest to come and bless your home is an invitation to ask for the mercy of God upon the household. The sprinkling of the Holy Water is a sign of God's presence in the home as an extension of His Holy House, the Church. It is a time to renew our commitment to God as we begin another year in His mercy and love for mankind.

Ten New Year Resolutions for followers of Jesus Christ:

In anticipation of the New Year celebration, we offer you the following New Year resolutions to think about:

- 1). Attend Church services on a regular basis, especially Sunday Liturgy. Sunday has gone from being a celebration of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ to being a celebration of sleeping in. Keep Sunday Holy and keep it in church. Arrive for Church Services on time! Why is it that the only appointments we ever miss or are late for are our appointments with Jesus Christ? At the end, these are the only appointments that will matter.
- 2.) Read your Bible; it reveals to us the person of Jesus Christ and it explains the life he calls us to live in this world. In order to deepen our relationship with Christ, we must read the Bible on a daily basis. Begin by reading for at least 10 minutes a day.
- 3). Ask for forgiveness from family, friends, and members of your parish. Forgiveness is a difficult virtue to put into practice and even more difficult to use regularly. Let us use the virtue of forgiveness as a basis for our continued commitment to Christ by regarding our earthly relationships with one another as truly important. Let us practice forgiveness; it is the first step in preparing for Holy Confession and Holy Communion each and every Sunday.
- 4). Make a prayer corner in your home in which you and your family gather regularly for prayer (at least twice a day). In the prayer corner, hang-up an icon of Christ, the Virgin Mary, and the patron saints of your family members. Have your Bible and prayer book there as well. You can also have a candle there and burn incense when you pray. If you need help, ask one of our clergy and we will gladly help you set up a prayer corner in your home.
- 5). Put your God-given talents to use and become a steward in your parish. We all have talents that we do not use to their full potential. Recognize them, ask for guidance from our Lord and put them to use for the benefit of your family, your neighbor, your church. Become an active, involved, caring Christian. Give of you time and talents to your Parish. Donate to food banks, become involved in our Liturgy after the Liturgy program in which we reach out to those less fortunate than us. Financially support your church and prioritize what you do with your treasure. Christ said, "Where your treasure is, there will be your heart also." We must lead by example.
- 6). Invite your children, grandchildren, parents, brothers, sisters, and friends to Church Services. Become an Evangelist and bring people to Jesus Christ. Every Christian is called to make disciples of all nations.
- 7). Within the first week of the New Year, contact any family members that have stepped away from your family; or if you have stepped away, call your family. Practice patience, understanding, and forgiveness. We are on this earth once and have only this opportunity to practice forgiveness and ask for it as well. We should never be embarrassed to admit our faults. No one is perfect. We all have faults and we never know when we may be called by God to return home.
- 8). Experience the forgotten medicine of the Church: the Sacrament of Confession. We neglect the one sure remedy that Christ gave us through the Church. That's like having a bacterial infection and not getting the antibiotics that you need. Use Confession to unburden yourself of your sins. You should come to Confession at least twice a year if you want to receive communion regularly. If we can't stand before our priest and confess, how can we ever imagine we will be able to stand before Christ Himself?
- 9). Commit your entire life to Jesus Christ and reclaim your entire being for Him. Reclaim your eyes for Jesus Christ; watch less TV and do not let your eyes gaze on sinful or lustful things. Reclaim your ears for Jesus Christ; listen to less music and don't entertain gossip. Reclaim your mouth for Jesus Christ; speak only good and holy words and do not speak ill of others. Reclaim your mind for Jesus Christ; deny yourself and your ego. Reclaim your body for Jesus Christ; dress appropriately at all times.
- 10). REPENT! Let us vow, that from this day, from this hour, from this minute, we shall strive above all else to love God and to do His Holy Will!

HAPPENING'S AT ST. ST JOE'S CATHOLIC CHURCH

Sunday December 30 at 3:00pm - Come & celebrate the season "A Christmas Concert". St. Joe's Choir under the direction of Ronald Ossovicki. There will be 125 – 150 cast and crew members of the Cleveland Performing Arts Ministries coming to St. Joseph, Marblehead in March. There will be 3 shows:

Friday, March 29 @ 7 pm
Saturday, March 30 @ 7 pm
Sunday, March 31 @ 1 pm

All take place in the church.

Come see the vivid musical passion play, "THE TETELESTAI" here in Marblehead.

Righteous Priest Aaron

Commemorated on *December 16*

The Righteous Aaron was the son of Amram and Jochebed, and the elder brother of the Prophet Moses the God-seer, and also of Miriam. He was a direct descendent of Levi by both parents. God called him "the Levite" in Exodus 4:14, when He appointed Aaron to be the spokesman for Moses, who was "slow of speech," before the people. Later, he would also speak on behalf of Moses before Pharaoh in Egypt (Ex. 4:30; 7:2). Aaron was married to Elisheba, the daughter of the Prince of Judah (Ex. 6:23), who bore him four sons.

Moses was eighty years old and Aaron was eighty-three when they spoke to Pharaoh and asked that the Hebrews be released from their slavery. The Lord told Moses that Pharaoh would ask them for a miracle, and that Aaron should throw down his rod before him, and it would become a serpent (Ex. 7:9). When Pharaoh would not allow the Hebrews to leave Egypt, God told Moses to have Aaron stretch forth his rod over the Nile River, and it would turn to blood.

Following a succession of plagues, Pharaoh relented and let the people go, then Moses led them on their long journey to the Promised Land. In Chapter 17 of Exodus, the Hebrews fought Amalek in a battle at Rephidim. Moses stood atop a hill with the rod of God in his hand. As long as he raised his hand, the Hebrews prevailed, but when he became tired and lowered it, Amalek prevailed. Aaron and Hur sat Moses on a rock and held up his hands, one on each side. This was a prefiguration of the suffering of Christ, because the arms of Moses formed a cross. In the Greek Septuagint, the names Aaron and Hur begin with the letters Alpha and Omega, another reference to Christ (Revelation 1:8).

Aaron and his sons were anointed and sanctified to serve God as priests (Exodus chapter 29). In chapter 32, Aaron fell into temptation when Moses went up on Mount Sinai to receive the Commandments. Since Moses was taking a long time, the people grew restless and asked Aaron to make them a golden idol in the form of a calf so that they could offer sacrifices. He gave into them, and Moses was angry when he returned and saw them dancing and singing before the calf. He threw down the tablets on which God had written the Ten Commandments, and then he burned the golden calf and ground it to powder. He scattered the powder on the water, and he made the people drink it. When Moses asked those who were on the Lord's side to gather around him, the Levites came to him. He ordered them to take their swords and slay their sons, companions, and neighbors. About three thousand people were killed that day.

Later, Aaron and Miriam criticized Moses for marrying a Cushite woman (Num. 12:1). God was angry with them, so He punished Miriam with leprosy. She was healed by God seven days after Moses interceded for her.

In chapter 17 of Numbers, the people murmured against

Moses and Aaron, so God commanded that the leaders of the twelve tribes should have their names inscribed on their rods and placed in the tent of testimony. One would be chosen to make the people cease their grumbling against Moses and his brother. Aaron's rod bloomed miraculously in the tent of the testimony, to show that he had been chosen for this purpose.

Aaron reposed atop Mount Hor when he was one hundred and twenty-three years old. One of his descendants was St. Elizabeth, the mother of St. John the Baptist (Luke 1:5).

Why Go to Church?

If you're spiritually alive, you're going to love this!
If you're spiritually dead, you won't want to read it.
If you're spiritually curious, there is still hope!

A Church goer wrote a letter to the editor of a newspaper and complained that it made no sense to go to church every Sunday.

He wrote: "I've gone for 30 years now, and in that time I have heard something like 3,000 sermons, but for the life of me, I can't remember a single one of them. So, I think I'm wasting my time, the preachers and priests are wasting theirs by giving sermons at all."

This started a real controversy in the "Letters to the Editor" column. Much to the delight of the editor, it went on for weeks until someone wrote this clincher:

"I've been married for 30 years now. In that time my wife has cooked some 32,000 meals. But, for the life of me, I cannot recall the entire menu for a single one of those meals.

But I do know this: They all nourished me and gave me the strength I needed to do my work. If my wife had not given me these meals, I would be physically dead today.

Likewise, if I had not gone to church for nourishment, I would be spiritually dead today!"
When you are DOWN to nothing, God is UP to something!

Faith sees the invisible, believes the incredible & receives the impossible! Thank God for our physical and our spiritual nourishment!

IF YOU CANNOT SEE GOD IN ALL™, YOU CANNOT SEE GOD AT ALL !

B. I. B L. E. simply means: Basic Instructions Before Leaving Earth!