

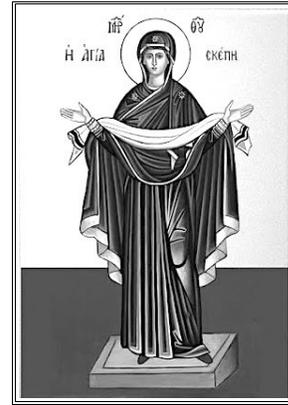
# St. Cyril Orthodox Church

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+ **September 26, 2021** +  
**14<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost.**

**Rest of St. John the Apostle & Evangelist.**

*Ven. Perekop, Wonderworker of Novgorod (+1492)*



**MANY YEARS** to **Maria Hendrickson**, who celebrated her birthday yesterday, and to her sister **Lucy Hendrickson**, who will celebrate her birthday a week later, this Saturday; to **John Lickwar, John Harris, and Arthur Hall**, who celebrate their nameday today; to **Adrian Afridi** and **Becca Wagner**, who celebrate their birthdays tomorrow; to **Mila Vasko**, who celebrates her nameday for St. Ludmilla on Wednesday, and to **Ron DeLorme**, who celebrates his nameday for St. Roman the Melodist on Friday.

**MEMORY ETERNAL** to **Chris Nickolas**, who fell asleep in the Lord on October 30, 2017.

**FRIDAY MORNING – Protection of the Theotokos.** We will celebrate the Divine Liturgy on Friday at 8:30 am, asking the Theotokos for her motherly protection over our community.

**INQUIRER CLASS** after Sunday coffee hour today. We will discuss the Holy Trinity.

**TREASURER UPDATE** – For September so far, we have received \$7,297, including a grant of \$1,667 from the OCA and of \$1,400 from the Diocese of the South. Our estimated expenses for this month are \$11,025.

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**Abba Dorotheos the Thebite once sent his disciple to get water from the well.** No sooner had the disciple uncovered the well to draw water, than he saw a huge poisonous snake inside. Excited, he ran back to his Elder.

“Abba! We are done for! Our water is poisoned! I found an asp in the well.”

“And if the Evil One decides to put asps in all of the wells, will you die from thirst?” the Elder asked, shaking his head at the cowardice of his disciple.



Afterwards the Elder went to the well, picked up the bucket, and drew the water himself. He made the sign of the Cross and said, “The malice of the Enemy cannot endure the Cross.”

## St. Nephon on the Sickness of Debauchery

Our road passed by a house of ill repute. Outside of this place of debauchery the saint saw a man of noble appearance, who was very sad. He had hidden his face in his two palms and was lamenting; afterward he raised his hands toward heaven and prayed sighing, and again he wept filled with dejection.

Nephon himself started to weep, while at the same time approaching the unknown nobleman. “In the name of God, brother,” he said to him, “what happened to you that you are so sad that you are weeping inconsolably outside this place of ill repute? Tell me, please, because your weeping is breaking my heart.”

“Renowned Nephon, I am an angel of God. As you know, at the time of baptism, every Christian receives from God a guardian angel of his life. I, too, undertook the task of guarding a man. But he embittered me thoroughly by sinning continually. Indeed he is now inside this house of ill repute and is lying in the bed of immorality with some woman of the street. Seeing this plight how can I not weep for the image of God that is plunged in such darkness?”



“Why don't you warn him to avoid sin?” Nephon asked again.

“Unfortunately, I cannot approach him, because from the time that he began to do evil, he became a slave of the demons, and I have no authority over him.”

“But why don't you have any authority? Didn't God entrust his salvation to you?”

“Listen to me, servant of God. Our Lord created man with free will and let him travel on the road he likes. He showed him the narrow road and the wide one also, and He told him that ‘the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life; for the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction.’ He even revealed to him the outcome of each road. The one deceives with a little temporary pleasure, but eternal damnation follows it. The other has a little effort here but eternal rest in the endless ages. *What warning can I give to my man, whom God gave me to guard, since our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, with His own lips warns, begging and teaching all to abstain from filthy deeds?*”

“And why did you raise your hands to heaven sighing bitterly?”

“I saw the demons around him, some singing, some playing the guitars, and others clapping their hands. Some even were laughing sarcastically at his expense. My heart was

burning seeing those abominable creatures triumphing. That's why I begged God to save His creature from the snares of the dark demons and to grant that I rejoice in his return. I was praying that He enable me to surrender his soul white and pure with repentance.”

The angel said these things and disappeared from our sight. Then, we left too. On the way the saint was saying that there is no deed worse than that of debauchery. But should the immoral one desire to repent, the All-Kind God accepts him more quickly than all other kinds of sinners, because this passion is rooted in man, and in addition, the devil inflames it even more with various temptations. For one to conquer this passion he must struggle with vigils and fasts.

And he added, as we were walking: “Once I saw a man traveling on the wide road of sin. The eyes of my soul opened then and I saw around him some thirty demons making noises. Some were buzzing like flies in his face. Others whistled like mosquitoes in his ears, while the rest of them had tied his feet and neck and were dragging him forcibly, one here and another there. At this sight my eyes filled with tears, and I was wondering what those ropes dragging the man could mean. Then God revealed to me that each rope corresponds to one type of immorality. The demons that whistle in the ears of the man sink him into despair, while the others that buzz in his face make him shameless and impudent. These are the things the Lord revealed to me. And at once I saw his angel following from afar, walking stooped over, sad and grieved. . . .”

## **The Oil of the Vigil Light**

The saint also had the following amazing habit: when he was to sleep a little, he would first spread stones on the ground and throw a small mattress there. Then he would chant funeral hymns, as if he were planning to bury himself; and recite by heart four Epistle lessons, four Gospel lessons, and a few other things. Finally, making the sign of the cross three times on his bed, he would lie down, using a stone for a pillow.

One night, therefore, when the servant of God was sleeping a little, the devil came holding a shovel and wanted to hit him. But suddenly, very terrified, he jumped noisily outside again and disappeared like smoke. As he was leaving he was gnashing his teeth and saying: “O Mary, you burn me everywhere, protecting this hardhead.”

Hearing these words, Nephon realized that the Theotokos defended and guarded him. And this because every night before sleeping, he would take oil from her oil lamp and anoint his forehead, ears, and all his senses. This is why the devil was routed and disappeared. From then he saw the power this oil of the Theotokos and all the saints had, and oftentimes he would give it to his acquaintances to anoint themselves at bedtime.

### **Part 3: Thoughts about Our Thoughts from Elder Thaddeus of Vitovnica**

From the book *Our Thoughts Determine Our Lives*

(15) “This is how we must live – controlling our thoughts. It is not good to dwell on every thought that comes to us; otherwise we lose our peace. If we learn to refuse such proposals, we are quiet. We do not fantasize or create any images in our mind.”

(16) “While praying, a person should not have any thoughts, but rather become selfless.... When praying, we should not be preoccupied with ourselves, because in that case we are so absorbed in our own needs that we ourselves are detrimental to our prayer.... Let us say someone is threatening us, or trying to talk us into doing something bad. Let him do so; this person has a will of his own. Let him do his job, and we will do ours, which is to preserve our inner peace.”

(17) “The Holy Fathers have written much about how to control one’s mind and heart. They have said that we must endeavor to perform every task, every kind of work, from the heart, because feelings come from the heart, not from the head. We think with the head, but when everything proceeds from the heart, this is a concentration of all the powers of the mind in the heart. When we pray, we must do so from the heart, for God is the Lord of the heart.”

(18) “God reveals Himself only to the meek and humble.... He who is not obedient cannot attain humility.”

(19) “We should not think too much about who our superiors are, or who our employer is. What we should bear in mind is that every type of work on earth and in all the universe is God’s work, and as such it should be performed from the heart, without reservation.”

(20) “When our neighbor comes to us with his troubles, we take part in them, but if we do not know how to relax – to give all our infirmities and those of our neighbor to the Lord – then we bear this cumbersome burden in our own minds and hearts and, over time, we become unbearably stressed and nervous.... This is because we have not taught ourselves to let go of our thoughts. When our thoughts are at peace, our body rests too.”

