



Through the prayers of our holy fathers and mother, O Lord Jesus Christ, our God, have mercy on us. Amen.

Christ is risen from the dead, trampling down death by death, and upon those in the tombs bestowing life! (3x)

Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal, have mercy on us. (3x)

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

O Most Holy Trinity, have mercy on us. O Lord, cleanse us from our sins. O Master, pardon our transgressions. O Holy One, visit and heal our infirmities, for Your Name's sake.

Lord, have mercy. (3x) Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

Our Father, Who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy Name. Thy Kingdom come. Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us, and lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.

Lord, have mercy. (3x) Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

Come, let us worship God our King.

Come, let us worship and fall down before Christ, our King and our God.

Come, let us worship and fall down before Christ Himself, our King and our God.

PSALM 51 (50 LXX)
A prayer of repentance

Have mercy on me, O God, in Your great mercy,
and in the abundance of Your compassions
blot out my transgressions.
Wash me thoroughly from my lawlessness,
and cleanse me from my sin.
For I know my transgressions,
and my sin is always before me.
Against You alone have I sinned,
and done evil before You,
so that You are justified in Your words
and victorious in Your judgment.
For, behold, I was conceived in iniquity,
and in sin my mother gave birth to me.
For, behold, You love truth,
You revealed to me the unknown
and secret things of Your wisdom.
Sprinkle me with hyssop, and I will be cleansed.
Wash me, and I will be whiter than snow.
Make me to hear joy and gladness,
let the bones that You have humbled rejoice.
Turn Your face away from my sins,
and blot out all my transgressions.
Create in me a clean heart, O God,
and renew a right Spirit within me.
Do not cast me away from Your presence,
and do not take Your Holy Spirit from me.
Restore to me the joy of Your salvation,
and establish me with Your guiding Spirit.
Then I will teach transgressors Your ways,
and sinners will return to You.
Rescue me from bloodshed, O God, the God of my salvation,
and my tongue will rejoice at Your righteousness.

O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth will declare Your praise,
for if You had desired sacrifice, I would have given it,
You will not take pleasure in whole burnt offerings.
The sacrifice to God is a broken spirit,
a broken and humbled heart God will not despise.
Do good, O Lord, to Zion, in Your good pleasure,
and let the walls of Jerusalem be rebuilt.
Then You will be pleased with the sacrifice of righteousness,
with offerings and whole-burnt offerings,
then bulls will be offered on Your altar.

Troparia and Sessional Hymns of Matins of Thursday of the third week of Pascha

The noble Joseph having taken down Your most pure Body from the tree, wrapped it in a fine linen, anointed it with spices, and placed it in a new tomb, but on the third day You arose, O Lord, granting the world great mercy.

When You descended to death, O Life Immortal, then You slayed hell with the lightning of Your Divinity. And when You also raised the dead out of the nethermost depths, all the hosts of the heavens cried out, “O Life-giver, Christ our God, glory You.”

The Angel standing by the tomb cried to the myrrh-bearing women, “Myrrh is fitting for the dead, but Christ has been revealed a stranger to corruption. Rather cry aloud, ‘The Lord is risen, granting the world great mercy!’”

Bringing myrrh for Your burial, the women came early to the tomb in secret, fearing the remorselessness of the Jews and foreseeing the secure guard of the soldiers. Yet their weaker nature conquered that of men, for their compassionate purpose was pleasing to God. Therefore, they cried out, “Arise, O Lord, help us, and redeem us for Your Name’s sake.”

Verse: Their sound has gone out into all the earth, and their words to the ends of the universe.

You have made the fishermen wiser than philosophers, and sent them

out as messengers to all the earth, through Your profound love for mankind O Christ God, You have through them strengthened Your Church, and sent down Your blessings upon the faithful, for You alone are merciful and the Lover of mankind.

Verse: Wondrous is God in His saints, the God of Israel.

O Apostles, martyrs, prophets, and hierarchs, venerable and righteous ones, you have finished your course well and have kept the Faith: as you have boldness before the Savior, we beseech you to entreat Him on our behalf, that our souls may be saved.

Verse: Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit.

We have become partakers of the Divine nature, through you O Ever-virgin Theotokos, for you have given birth to the Incarnate God for us. Therefore, as is due, we all reverently magnify you.

Verse: Now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

O Savior, while the women were bringing myrrh and seeking to anoint You, the Lover of mankind, they heard an angel speak to them from within the tomb, saying, “The Lord and Giver of life is risen, trampling down hell and death.”

TODAY'S SCRIPTURE READINGS

Acts 8:26-39

²⁶Then an angel of the Lord said to Philip, “Get up and go toward the south to the road that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza.” (This is a wilderness road.) ²⁷So he got up and went. Now there was an Ethiopian eunuch, a court official of the Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, in charge of her entire treasury. He had come to Jerusalem to worship ²⁸and was returning home; seated in his chariot, he was reading the prophet Isaiah. ²⁹Then the Spirit said to Philip, “Go over to this chariot and join it.” ³⁰So Philip ran up to it and heard him reading the prophet Isaiah. He asked, “Do you understand what you are reading?” ³¹He replied, “How can I, unless someone guides me?” And he invited Philip to get in and sit beside him. ³²Now the passage of the scripture that he was reading was this, “Like a sheep he was led to the slaughter, and like a lamb silent before its shearer,

so he does not open his mouth. ³³ In his humiliation justice was denied him. Who can describe his generation? For his life is taken away from the earth.” ³⁴ The eunuch asked Philip, “About whom, may I ask you, does the prophet say this, about himself or about someone else?” ³⁵ Then Philip began to speak, and starting with this scripture, he proclaimed to him the good news about Jesus. ³⁶ As they were going along the road, they came to some water; and the eunuch said, “Look, here is water! What is to prevent me from being baptized?” ³⁸ He commanded the chariot to stop, and both of them, Philip and the eunuch, went down into the water, and Philip baptized him. ³⁹ When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord snatched Philip away; the eunuch saw him no more, and went on his way rejoicing.

John 6:40-44

⁴⁰ This is indeed the will of my Father, that all who see the Son and believe in him may have eternal life; and I will raise them up on the last day.” ⁴¹ Then the Jews began to complain about him because he said, “I am the bread that came down from heaven.” ⁴² They were saying, “Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How can he now say, ‘I have come down from heaven?’” ⁴³ Jesus answered them, “Do not complain among yourselves. ⁴⁴ No one can come to me unless drawn by the Father who sent me; and I will raise that person up on the last day.

PRAYERS TO END THE PANDEMIC OF CORONAVIRUS

Let us pray to the Lord. Lord, have mercy.

O God Almighty, Lord of heaven and earth, and of all creation visible and invisible: In Your inexpressible goodness, look down upon us, Your people gathered in Your Holy Name. Be our helper and defender in this day of affliction, for You know all our weaknesses and hear our cry in repentance and contrition of heart. O loving Lord, deliver us from the impending threat of the coronavirus. Send Your angel to watch over us and protect us. Grant health and recovery to those suffering from this virus. Guide the hands of the physicians and heal Your servants through them. Grant wisdom to those who are working on the vaccine for this virus. And preserve those who are healthy. Enable us to continue to serve our suffering

brothers and sisters in peace that together we may glorify Your most honorable and majestic Name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

O Lord Jesus Christ, in Your loving care, You traveled through towns and villages healing every disease and sickness, and at Your command, the sick were made well: Yourself now come to our aid, in the midst of the global spread of the coronavirus, and grant us to experience the miracle Your healing love.

Comfort the families of those who are sick or have died. May they regain their strength and health through quality medical care. And as they worry and grieve, defend them from illness and despair.

Heal us from our fear, which prevents nations from working together and neighbors from helping one another.

Guide the hands of the doctors and nurses and all medical professionals who seek to heal and help those affected and who put themselves at risk in the process. And impart Your wisdom on the researchers working on the vaccine for coronavirus.

Heal us from our pride, which can make us claim immunity to a disease that knows no boundaries. Instill the fear of You in the leaders of our nation and other nations of the world. Give them the foresight to act with charity and true concern for the well-being of the people they are meant to serve. Give them the wisdom to invest in long-term solutions that will help prepare for or prevent future outbreaks.

O Master and Lord, our Savior, Healer of all, stay by our side in this time of uncertainty and sorrow. Whether we are home or abroad, surrounded by many people suffering from this illness or only a few, stay with us as we patiently endure and mourn, persist and prepare.

For You are a merciful and loving God, and to You we give glory, to the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

PRAYER FOR DOCTORS AND NURSES

O Lord Jesus Christ our God, Lover of mankind, Physician of our souls and bodies, You endured the pain of our infirmities, and by Your

wounds we are healed. You gave sight to the man born blind and straightened the woman who was bent over for 18 years. You gave speech and sight to the mute man who was possessed by demons. You not only forgave the paralyzed man his sins, but healed him to walk. You restored the withered hand of a man in the synagogue and stopped the flow of blood of a woman who bled for 12 years. You raised Jairus' daughter back to life and resurrected Lazarus who was dead four days. You heal every infirmity under the sun: Yourself now, O Lord, grant Your grace to all the doctors, nurses, physicians, and researchers, who have labored and studied hour upon hour, to go into all the world, and also to heal by the talent You have given to each of them. Strengthen them by Your strength, that they may not fear evil or disease. Enlighten them to do no evil by the works of their hands, and preserve them and those they serve in peace. For You are our God, and to You we give glory together with Your Father, Who has no beginning, and Your Most Holy, Good, and Life-giving Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

SAINT OF THE DAY

Saint Alexis Toth, Confessor and Defender of Orthodoxy in America

Our holy Father Alexis, the defender of the Orthodox Faith and zealous worker in the Lord's vineyard, was born in Austro-Hungary on March 18, 1854 into a poor Carpatho-Russian family. Like many others in the Austro-Hungarian empire, the Toths were Eastern Rite Catholics. Alexis' father and brother were priests and his uncle was a bishop in the Uniate church. He received an excellent education and knew several languages (Carpatho-Russian, Hungarian, Russian, German, Latin, and a reading knowledge of Greek). He married Rosalie Mihalich, a priest's daughter, and was ordained on April 18, 1878 to serve as second priest in a Uniate parish. His wife died soon afterwards, followed by their only child – losses which the saint endured with the patience of Job.

In May of 1879, Father Alexis was appointed secretary to the Bishop of Presov and also Administrator of the Diocesan Administration. He was also entrusted with the directorship of an orphanage. At Presov Seminary, Father Toth taught Church History and Canon Law, which served him well in his

later life in America. Saint Alexis did not serve long as a professor or an administrator, for the Lord had a different future planned for him. In October 1889 he was appointed to serve as pastor of a Uniate parish in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Like another Abraham, he left his country and his relatives to fulfill the will of God (*Genesis 12:1*).

Upon his arrival in America, Father Alexis presented himself to the local Roman Catholic diocesan authority, Archbishop John Ireland, since there was no Uniate bishop in America at that time. Archbishop Ireland belonged to the party of American Catholics who favored the “Americanization” of all Roman Catholics. His vision for the future was founded on a common faith, customs, and the use of the English language for everything except liturgical celebrations. Naturally, ethnic parishes and non-Latin rite clergy did not fit into this vision. Thus, when Father Toth came to present his credentials, Archbishop Ireland greeted him with open hostility. He refused to recognize him as a legitimate Catholic priest or to grant permission for him to serve in his diocese.

As a historian and professor of Canon Law, Father Toth knew his rights under the terms of the Unia and would not accept Archbishop Ireland’s unjust decisions. In October of 1890, there was a meeting of eight of the ten Uniate priests in America at Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania under the chairmanship of Father Toth. By this time the American bishops had written to Rome demanding the recall to Europe of all Uniate priests in America, fearing that Uniate priests and parishes would hinder the assimilation of immigrants into American culture. While the Uniate bishops in Europe refused to listen to the priests’ pleas for help.

Archbishop Ireland sent a letter to his parishes ordering their members not to attend Father Toth’s parish nor to accept any priestly ministrations from him. Expecting imminent deportation, Father Toth explained the situation to his parishioners and suggested it might be best for him to leave and return to Europe.

“No,” they said. “Let’s go to the Russian bishop. Why should we always submit ourselves to foreigners?” It was decided to write to the Russian consul in San Francisco in order to ask for the name and address of the

Russian bishop. Ivan Mlinar went to San Francisco to make initial contact with Bishop Vladimir. Then in February 1891, Father Toth and his church warden, Paul Podany, also made the journey. Subsequently, Bishop Vladimir came to Minneapolis and on March 25, 1891 received Father Toth and 361 parishioners into the Orthodox Church of their ancestors. The parishioners regarded this event as a new Triumph of Orthodoxy, crying out with joy, “Glory to God for His great mercy!”

This initiative came from the people themselves, and was not the result of any coercion from outsiders. The Russian Orthodox Church was unaware of the existence of these Slavic Uniate immigrants to America, but responded positively to their petition to be reunited to the Orthodox Church.

The example of Saint Alexis and his parish in returning to Orthodoxy was an encouragement to hundreds of other Uniates. The ever-memorable Alexis was like a candle upon a candlestick giving light to others (*Matthew 5:15*), and his flock may be likened to the leaven mixed with meal which leavened the whole (*Matthew 13:33*). Through his fearless preaching he uprooted the tares which had sprung up in the wheat of true doctrine, and exposed the false teachings which had led his people astray. Although he did not hesitate to point out errors in the doctrines of other denominations, he was careful to warn his flock against intolerance. His writings and sermons are filled with admonitions to respect other people and to refrain from attacking their faith.

While it is true that he made some strong comments, especially in his private correspondence with the church administration, it must be remembered that this was done while defending the Orthodox Church and the American Mission from unfounded accusations by people who used much harsher language than Father Toth. His opponents may be characterized by intolerance, rude behavior, unethical methods and threats against him and his parishioners. Yet, when Father Alexis was offended or deceived by other people he forgave them, and he would often ask his bishop to forgive his omissions and mistakes.

In the midst of great hardships, this herald of godly theology and sound

doctrine poured forth an inexhaustible stream of Orthodox writings for new converts, and gave practical advice on how to live in an Orthodox manner. For example, his article “How We should Live in America” stresses the importance of education, cleanliness, sobriety, and the presence of children in church on Sundays and Holy Days.

Although the Minneapolis parish was received into the Orthodox Church in March 1891, it was not until July 1892 that the Holy Synod of Russia recognized and accepted the parish into the Diocese of Alaska and the Aleutians (*the official name of the Russian Orthodox diocese in North America at that time*). This resolution reached America only in October 1892. During that time there was a climate of religious and ethnic hostility against the new converts. Father Alexis was accused of selling out his own Carpatho-Russian people and his religion to the “Muscovites” for financial gain.

In reality he did not receive any financial support for a long time, for his parish was very poor. Until his priestly salary began to arrive from Russia, he was obliged to work in a bakery in order to support himself. Even though his funds were meager, he did not neglect to give alms to the poor and needy. He shared his money with other clergy worse off than himself, and contributed to the building of churches and to the education of seminarians in Minneapolis. He was not anxious about his life (*Matthew 6:25*), what he would eat or drink or wear. Trusting in God to take care of him, Saint Alexis followed the admonition of our Savior to “seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you” (*Matthew 6:33*). So he bore the tribulation, slander, and physical attacks with patience and spiritual joy, reminding us that “godliness is stronger than all” (*Wisdom of Solomon 10:12*).

Bishops Vladimir, Nicholas, Saint Tikhon, and Platon recognized the special gifts of Father Toth, so they often sent him forth to preach and teach wherever there were people of Slavic background. Even though he was aware of his shortcomings and inadequacies, yet he was obedient to the instructions of the bishops. He did not hesitate or make excuses, but went immediately to fulfill his mission. Saint Alexis visited many Uniate parishes, explaining the differences between Orthodoxy, Protestantism, Roman

Catholicism and Uniatism, stressing that the fullness of Faith is in Orthodoxy.

Like Josiah, “he behaved himself uprightly in the conversion of his people” (*Sirach 49:2*). He was instrumental in the formation or return of seventeen parishes, planting a vineyard of Christ in America, and increasing its fruitful yield many times over. By 1909, the time of his blessed repose, many thousands of Carpatho-Russian and Galician Uniates had returned to Orthodoxy. This was a major event in the history of the North American Mission, which would continue to shape the future of Orthodoxy in this country for many generations to come. Any future growth or success may truly be regarded as the result of Father Toth’s apostolic labors.

Who can tell of the saint’s spiritual struggles? Who can speak of the prayers which his pious soul poured forth unto God? He did not make a public display of his piety, but prayed to God in secret with all modesty, with contrition and inward tears. God, Who sees everything done in secret, openly rewarded the saint (*Matthew 6:6*). It is inconceivable that Saint Alexis could have accomplished his apostolic labors unless God had blessed and strengthened him for such work. Today the Church continues to reap the fruits of his teaching and preaching.

Father Toth’s efforts did not go unrecognized in his own lifetime. He received a jeweled miter from the Holy Synod, as well as the Order of Saint Vladimir and the Order of Saint Anna from Czar Nicholas II for distinguished service and devotion to God and country. In 1907, he was considered as a candidate for the episcopal office. He declined this honor, however, humbly pointing out that this responsibility should be given to a younger, healthier man.

At the end of 1908, Saint Alexis’ health began to decline due to a complication of various illnesses. He went to the seashore in southern New Jersey in an attempt to regain his health, but soon returned to Wilkes-Barre, where he was confined to bed for two months. Saint Alexis reposed on Friday, May 7, 1909, the feast of Saints Sava and Alexius the Hermit of the Kiev Caves. Saint Alexis’ love and concern for his spiritual children did not cease with his death. Before closing the account of his life, it would be most

appropriate to reveal but one example of his heavenly intercession:

In January 1993 a certain man prayed to Saint Alexis to help him obtain information about his son from whom he had been separated for twenty-eight years. Placing his confidence in the saint's boldness before God, he awaited an answer to his prayer. The very next day the man's son telephoned him. It seems the young man was in church when he was suddenly filled with an overwhelming desire to contact his father. He had been taken to another state by his mother, and she changed his name when he was a child. This is why his father was unable to locate him. Having learned from his mother that his father was an Orthodox Christian, he was able with the help of an Orthodox priest to obtain his father's phone number in a distant city. As a result of that telephone call, the young man later visited his father, who rejoiced to see what sort of man his son had become. The father gave thanks to God and to Saint Alexis for reuniting him with his son.

Saint Alexis was a true man of God who guided many Carpatho-Russian and Galician immigrants through the dark confusion of religious challenges in the New World and back to the unity of the Orthodox Church through his grace-filled words and by his holy example. In his last will and testament Saint Alexis commended his soul to God's mercy, asking forgiveness from everyone and forgiving everybody. His holy relics now rest at Saint Tikhon Monastery in South Canaan, Pennsylvania where the faithful may come to venerate them and to entreat Saint Alexis' intercessions on their behalf.

TROPARION AND KONTAKION OF SAINT ALEXIS

Troparion

O righteous Father Alexis,
our heavenly intercessor and teacher,
divine adornment of the Church of Christ.
Entreat the Master of all
to strengthen the Orthodox Faith in America,
to grant peace to the world
and to our souls, great mercy.

Kontakion

Let us, the faithful, praise the Priest Alexis,
a bright beacon of Orthodoxy in America,
a model of patience and humility,
a worthy shepherd of the Flock of Christ.
He called back the sheep who had been led astray
and brought them by his preaching
to the Heavenly Kingdom.

CONCLUDING PRAYERS

The angel cried to the Lady full of grace,
“Rejoice, O pure Virgin. Again I say, Rejoice.
Your Son is risen from His three days in the tomb.
With Himself He has raised all the dead.
Rejoice, all people.”

Shine! Shine! O new Jerusalem!
The glory of the Lord has shone on you.
Exult now and be glad, O Zion.
Be radiant, O pure Theotokos,
in the resurrection of your Son.

O Christ, great and most holy Pascha,
O Wisdom, Word, and Power of God:
Grant that we may more perfectly partake of You
in the never-ending Day of Your Kingdom.

Through the prayers of our holy fathers and mother, O Lord Jesus Christ,
our God, have mercy on us. Amen.

Christ is risen from the dead, trampling down death by death, and upon
those in the tombs bestowing life! (3x)

