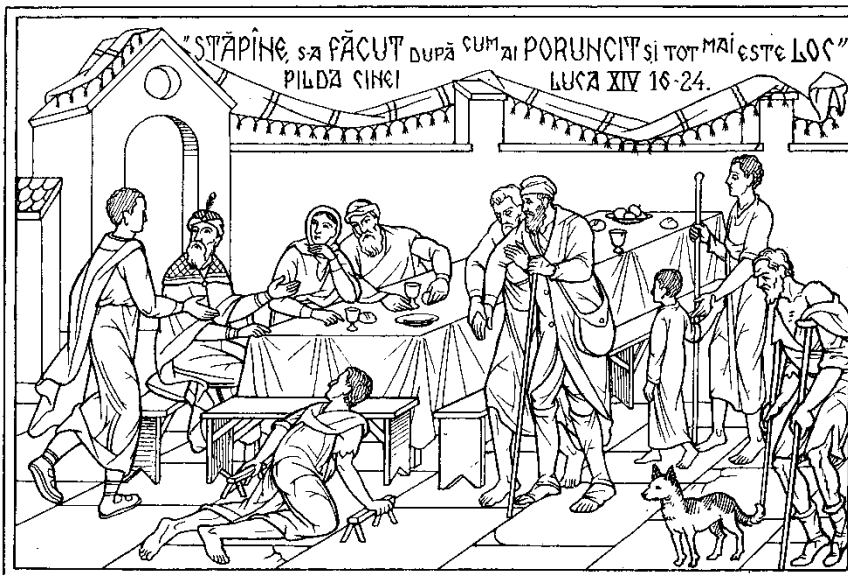


## December 15, 2013: The 28<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost (The parable of the Great Supper)

### Epistle: Colossians 1:12-18:

*Give thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light. He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love, in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins. He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist. And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence.*

### Gospel: Luke 14:16-24:



*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.’”*

What a great honor! What a privilege to be invited to the Lord's Supper! How can I show my thankfulness to the Almighty God for including my name on the list of those invited to the Supper? What have I done to deserve this?

Ten days before the redeeming Feast of the Lord's Incarnation, the invitation of our Savior goes out to all people: "*Come, for all things are now ready!*" The emphasis is on the adverb "now." What does this "now" mean? This is a reference to a specific time in history. It is the time St. Paul the apostle calls "the fullness of time" (Galatians 4:4). We can call it "God's moment." It is the time when God the Father decided to implement His eternal plan for the salvation of mankind; It is the time of the Lord's Nativity. It is "now" and not "then," before His Nativity, because "then" the door to the divine Supper/Banquet room was shut, the access was not possible. All those who lived before the first coming of the Lord, even the patriarchs and the prophets of the Old Testament fell asleep in the hope of hearing this invitation. Therefore, the Lord's invitation "*Come, for all things are now ready*" is addressed both to those who lived before His Nativity as well as to those who lived and will live after His Nativity. The Lord's invitation transcends time and generations. This being the case, its main characteristic is its permanence, meaning that it is just as valid today or a thousand of years from now as it was when Christ the Savior addressed it in person. It is a "now" addressed invitation.

The only question is this: How are we going to respond to the invitation? Are we going to invoke excuses like those from the above gospel reading? Do we get the message conveyed by this parable that by coming up with excuses we in fact exclude ourselves from the Lord's Supper? Even a delay could have the same tragic consequences because each day of inaction is a missed opportunity.

As Orthodox faithful we have the unique advantage of participating in the Lord's Supper (the Divine Liturgy) every Sunday and Feast day. And if we truly participate, meaning that if we prepare ourselves to receive the Holy Eucharist and strengthen our communion with Christ and His Church, not only do we respond positively to His invitation, but we actually pre-taste of His Supper here and now.

**Fr. George Bazgan**

### **Sunday Fellowship**

The following families are scheduled to look after this Sunday's (December 15) fellowship:

**Marius & Simona Neamtu**

**Ioan Moga**

**George Moss & Sally Lore**

**Thank you all very much!**

## **Food Collection**

**A food drive for the Food Bank is under way  
at our church until December 22.  
Please bring nonperishable goods and deposit them  
at the entrance of the church!**

**May God Bless Your Generosity!**

## **Vespers Service**

**During the Christmas Fast, Vespers will  
be celebrated every Saturday at 5:00 PM.**

**Following the Vespers Service, Confession  
will be heard for those who want to  
prepare for Holy Communion.**

## **NEW YEAR'S PARTY**

**Would you like to celebrate the arrival of 2014 at the  
Romanian Center, in a traditional Romanian atmosphere?  
Then contact Viorel Ciocan at 780-994-2304 for tickets  
(\$80/adults and \$15/children,7-14),  
and additional details.**

## **THE ANNUAL CHRISTMAS PARTY**

The traditional annual Christmas Party will be held this year on December 22 in the Main Hall, following the Divine Liturgy and regular fellowship. Following the program, presented by the Sunday School children, Santa Claus will arrive with gifts for the children. All children are welcome!

## **BAKED GOODS FOR CHRISTMAS**

Those who are interested to buy baked goods (cozonaci) for Christmas, please contact Psa. Maria at 780-473-0029, to place your order.



**THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT!**

## Membership or Contribution?

Spiritually speaking, we become members of the Church (the mystical body of Christ) when we receive the Sacraments of Christian initiation: Baptism, Chrismation and Holy Communion, which unite us with Christ ("*Do you unite yourself unto Christ? I do*"). Saint Paul the apostle says: "*Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ?*" (I Cor. 6:15). So, since we are united with Christ, we are also united with the Church, His body, which He Himself established.

The Church is a divine-human institution, established by Christ, the Son of God, who was God (divine) and Man (human) at the same time and in the same person. The mission of the Church is to teach, sanctify and lead her faithful to salvation: "*And Jesus came and spoke to them (the apostles), saying, 'All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age'*" (Matthew 28:18-20).

The Church as a human institution/community was established on the day of the Pentecost, when three thousand people were baptized: ..."*and that day about three thousand souls were added to them*" (to the apostles) (Acts 2:41).

From the very beginning, the Church was supported materially by her faithful/members, as we read in the same Book of Acts: "*Now the multitude of those who believed were of one heart and one soul; neither did anyone say that any of the things he possessed was his own, but they had all things in common. And with great power the apostles gave witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And great grace was upon them all. Nor was there anyone among them who lacked; for all who were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the proceeds of the things that were sold, and laid them at the apostles' feet; and they distributed to each as anyone had need*" (4:32-35).

Since the churches in North America and their priests don't receive any material support whatsoever from any government, it is imperative that those who have been accepted into the community of the faithful (the Church) as spiritual members, contribute with their time and money, thus reaffirming their membership to the divine-human institution, the Church, and assisting her to continue her mission in the world.

It is for the reason of this double membership (spiritual and material) that the term membership is the appropriate one as opposed to contribution.

**Fr. George Bazgan**

## **MEMBERSHIP**

**At the Annual General Meeting, held on February 24, 2013, the decision was made to keep the membership contribution unchanged: \$100/person (\$200/couple).**

**We encourage everyone to pay their membership as soon as possible!**

**Keep in mind that \$35 of each membership goes to the Archdiocese.**

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT!**

## **SILENT AUCTION**

**A silent auction will be organized on Sunday, December 22, 2013 in the Fellowship Hall. The goal is to raise funds for the ongoing major projects at the church.**

**The top items which people can bid on are four original framed oil paintings by Bogdan Constantin from Romania.**

**Each painting is valued at \$300, which is below the market value in Romania.**

**Those who have items which can be included in this auction, please let us know.**