

We would like to welcome all parish visitors and invite you to join us after the Liturgy for Coffee hour.

Orthodox Church of the Mother of God

OCA – Diocese of New York-New Jersey

V. Rev. Dr. Matthew Searfoorce, Rector

Sub-Deacon Edward Dawson

Sub-Deacon Vlashi

Parish Council President: Andrew Romanofsky

Parish Council Vice President: Holly Dawson



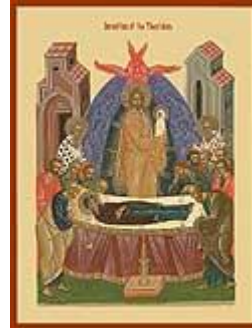
Sunday, August 21, 2016

Gospel: Matthew 14:22-34

Tone 8

Epistle: 1 Corinthians 3:9-17

9th Sunday after Pentecost; Afterfeast of the Dormition of the Mother of God



*Afterfeast of the Dormition
of the Mother of God*

**Glory to
Jesus Christ!**

**Glory
Forever!**

*In giving birth you preserved your virginity,
In falling asleep you did not forsake the world, O Theotokos.
You were translated to life, O Mother of Life,
And by your prayers, you deliver our souls from death.*

(Troparion – Tone 1)

*Neither the tomb, nor death could hold the Theotokos,
Who is constant in prayer and our firm hope in her intercessions.
For being the Mother of Life,
She was translated to life by the One who dwelt in her virginal womb.*

(Kontakion – Tone 2)

Today's Commemorated Feasts and Saints

9th Sunday After Pentecost — Tone 8. Afterfeast of the Dormition. Apostle Thaddæus of the Seventy (ca. 44). Martyr Bassa of Edessa and her sons Theogonius, Agapius, and Pistus (2nd c.). Ven. Abramius, Archimandrite and Wonderworker of Smolensk, and his disciple, Ven. Ephraim (13th c.). Ven. Abramius the Lover-of-Labor, of the Kiev Caves (Near Caves—12th-13th c.).

Prayer Requests

For Health of:

Clay Gallagher, on his birthday, offered by his brother Sub-Deacon Vlashi.

Presbyter Volodymyr Zablotsky, who had undergone a medical procedure on Monday afternoon, offered by the Diocese of NY/NJ and Archbishop Michael.

Liturgical Schedule

Sunday, August 21st

9:40 am: Hours

10:00 am: Divine Liturgy

Saturday, August 27th

6:30 pm: Vespers

Sunday, August 28th

9:40 am: Hours

10:00 am: Divine Liturgy

12:15 pm: Council Mtg.

Saturday, September 3rd

6:30 pm: Vespers

Sunday, September 4th

9:40 am: Hours

9:45 am: General

Confession

10:00 am: Divine Liturgy

Saturday, September 10th

6:30 pm: Vespers

Sunday, September 11th

9:40 am: Hours

10:00 am: Divine Liturgy

Bulletin Sponsors:

Sub-Deacon Vlashi

Readings:

The Prokeimenon in the 8th Tone:

Pray and make your vows before the Lord, our God!

(Psalm 75:12)

vs. In Judah God is known; His name is great in Israel.

(Psalm 75:2)

Another, Tone 3 (Song of the Theotokos):

My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Savior.

(Luke 1:46-47)

Epistle: 1 Corinthians 3:9-17

Brethren, we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, God's building. According to the grace of God given to me, like a skilled master builder. I laid a foundation, and another man is building upon it. Let each man take care how he builds upon it. For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any one builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw - each man's work will become manifest; for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done. If the work which any man has built on the foundation survives, he will receive a reward. If any man's work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire. Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you? If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him. For God's temple is holy, and that temple you are.

Alleluia in the 8th Tone:

Come, let us rejoice in the Lord! Let us make a joyful noise to God our Savior! *(Psalm 94:1)*

vs. Let us come before His face with thanksgiving; let us make a joyful noise to Him with songs of praise! *(Psalm 94:2)*

Another, Tone 2 (Feast):

Arise, O Lord, into Thy resting place: Thou and the Ark of Thy sanctification! *(Psalm 131:8)*

Gospel: Matthew 14:22-34

At that time, Jesus made the disciples get into the boat and go before him to the other side, while he dismissed the crowds. And after he had dismissed the crowds, he went up into the hills by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone, but the boat by this time was many furlongs distant from the land, beaten by the waves; for the wind was against them. And in the fourth watch of the night he came to them, walking on the sea. But when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were terrified, saying, "It is a ghost!" And they cried out for fear. But immediately he spoke to them, saying "Take heart, it is I; have no fear." And Peter answered him, "Lord, if it is you, bid me come to you on the water." He said, "Come." So Peter got out of the boat and walked on the water and came to Jesus; but when he saw the wind, he was afraid, and beginning to sink he cried out, "Lord, save me." Jesus immediately reached out his hand and caught him, saying to him, "O man of little faith, why did you doubt?" And when they entered the boat, the wind ceased. And those in the boat worshiped him, saying, "Truly you are the Son of God." And when they had crossed over, they came to land at Gennesaret.



Afterfeast of the Dormition of the Mother of God

The Church continues to honor the passage of the Most Holy Theotokos from death to life. Just as Christ once dwelt in the virginal womb of His Mother, now He takes Her “to dwell in His courts.”



Bulletin Sponsor: Use the sign-up sheet at the candle stand for the health of, eternal memory of or a Pannikhida for a loved one or friend, for a donation of \$10. Sponsors will be remembered during Divine Liturgy for the day/week that you signed up for.

Memorial Candles: Candles be purchased at the candle stand, suggested donation of \$10 for a large one.

Private Confessions: Can be heard a half hour before any service. See Father Matthew for other times.

General Confession: Will be at 9:45 am on the first Sunday of the month.

Pannikhida Service: The third Sunday of each month there will be a Pannikhida after Divine Liturgy. If you would like your loved ones to be remembered please give a list of names to Father Matthew before that Sunday for those to be remembered in the month.

Special Announcements for the bulletin can be submitted by E-Mail: ChurchMotherOfGod@outlook.com

The Living Clean Group of Narcotics Anonymous meets every Friday from 8-9:15 pm downstairs in the community room.

The Grey Book Step Meeting Group of Narcotics Anonymous meets every Tuesday from 7-8:00 pm downstairs in the community room.



Orthodox Church of the Mother of God: Parish News

2016 Stewardship Update

2016 Goal / Budget: \$27,370.00

Actual received as of July 30: \$16,202.98 (59.1% of our goal)

Actual expended as of July 30: \$16,545.63

Shortfall: **-\$342.65**

The Most Common Factor In Declining Churches

By Thom S. Rainer

I am honored and humbled to be in a place where I get to hear from and study about thousands of churches. The leaders and congregants in those churches provide me with incredible information and data. I am grateful, because I'm not smart enough to understand these issues on my own.

As God has allowed me to study congregations for more than 25 years, I began to see a common pattern in churches that had become outwardly focused. You can read [some of the practical steps these churches have taken.](#)

The Most Common Factor

Conversely, though, I also can see a simple but profound pattern among the declining churches.

Stated simply, the most common factor in declining churches is an inward focus.

The ministries are only for the members. The budgetary funds are used almost exclusively to meet the needs of the members. The times of worship and worship styles are geared primarily for the members. Conflict takes place when members don't get things their way. You get the picture.

Warning Symptoms

After studying and consulting with thousands of churches, I began to see clearly this pattern. Even more, I began to recognize symptoms of an inward focus. See if you recognize a few of these.

- There are very few attempts to minister to those in the community.
- Church business meetings become arguments over preferences and desires.
- Numbers of members in the congregation are openly critical of the pastor, other church staff, and lay leaders in the church.
- Any change necessary to become a Great Commission church is met with anger and resistance.
- The past becomes the hero.
- Culture is seen as the enemy instead of an opportunity for believers to become salt and light.
- Pastors and other leaders in the church become discouraged and withdraw from effective leadership.
- If the churches are a part of a denomination or similar affiliation, meetings of those denominations mirror the churches in lost focus and divisiveness.

There is Hope

For those of us in Christ, however, there is always hope—His hope.

I have written in recent years about the dire straits of most of our churches. I have felt it necessary to do so in order to face the facts. Indeed, I wrote [Autopsy of a Deceased Church](#) about the deaths of many churches.

I don't have my head in the sand. I know times are tough in many churches. I know congregations are dying every day. I know many church leaders are discouraged.

But we serve the God of hope.

Decline in our churches does not have to be a reality.

Source: <http://www.lifeway.com/pastors/2016/08/16/the-most-common-factor-in-declining-churches/>

Accessed: 18 August 2016



NY/NJ Diocese News

Saturday, September 10th – ONE Conference *“The Word and the World; Truth and Context”*

High school, college students and young adults are encouraged to join over 1,000 others from across the country for a day of fellowship, education and worship at Sts. Nicholas, Constantine and Helen Church in Roseland, NJ.

Metropolitan Savas of the Greek Archdiocese in Pittsburgh, PA will be the keynote speaker.

For more information or to register, please visit:

<http://www.oneorthodox.org/events/2016-one-conference/>

Annual Diocesan Assembly **November 1-2, 2016**

His Eminence, Archbishop Michael, in conjunction with the Diocesan Council, has scheduled the **2016 Annual Diocesan Assembly** to be convened on **Tuesday and Wednesday, November 1st and 2nd, at Holy Trinity Church, 46 Seymour Street, Yonkers NY.**

Day One of the event will consist of the formal business of the Diocesan Assembly itself; Day Two will consist of workshops for clergy and lay leaders of our parishes. Lay delegates to the Assembly are strongly encouraged to stay for Day Two and attend the educational workshops designed specifically for them.

All information, documents, and reports for the Assembly will be published, as they become available, on a dedicated webpage:

http://www.nynjoca.org/2016_diocesan_assembly.html

From the Office of the Bishop

Congratulations are extended to:

Protodeacon John Eby, who was awarded the Kamilavka for his many years of outstanding diaconal service to the Orthodox Church in America. The award was presented at Holy Trinity Church in Yonkers, New York, on Sunday, August 14, 2016, by Archbishop Michael on behalf of His Beatitude, Metropolitan Tikhon and the entire Holy Synod of Bishops of the Orthodox Church in America.

Christopher Chasse, who was tonsured a Reader of the Church, at the Assumption of the Holy Virgin Church in Clifton, New Jersey, on Sunday, August 14, 2016, by His Eminence, Archbishop Michael.

Upcoming Events:

- August 25: ORTHODOX YOUTH DAY, Six Flags Great Adventure, Jackson, NJ
- August 27: New York City Deanery Church School Teachers Conference, Brooklyn, NY
- Aug. 31-Sept. 1: Diocesan Clergy Conference, Assumption Church, Clifton, NJ
- September 4: New York State Deanery Clergy Family Picnic, Lansing, NY
- September 11: New Jersey Deanery Clergy Family Picnic, Brick, NJ
- November 1-2: Diocesan Assembly, Holy Trinity Church, Yonkers, NY
- November 11-13: Diocesan Girls Retreat, Saint Basil Academy, Garrison, NY
- November 18-19: Diocesan Matushki Retreat, Warwick Retreat Center, Warwick, NY



Orthodox Church in America (OCA) News

Second annual Mission School to open August 22

With the blessing of the Holy Synod of Bishops of the Orthodox Church in America, the second annual Mission School will be held at the Immaculate Conception Seminary here August 22-26, 2016.

“Fully funded through a bequest to the OCA earmarked for missions and evangelism, the first Mission School was held in Detroit in 2015,” said Archpriest Eric G. Tosi, OCA Secretary and Mission School facilitator. “Once again, each diocesan bishop had been asked to select one clergyman and one lay person to participate, with the expectation that they in turn will share what they have learned with their own churches and dioceses.”

In addition to Father Eric, instructors include Archpriest John Jillions, OCA Chancellor; Archpriest Chad Hatfield, CEO of Saint Vladimir’s Seminary, Yonkers, NY; Archpriest Steven Voytovich, Dean of Saint Tikhon’s Seminary, South Canaan, PA; Archpriest David Rucker, OCMC missionary and member of the faculty of Saint Herman’s Seminary, Kodiak, AK; Priest John Parker, Chairman of the OCA’s Department of Evangelization; three seasoned mission clergy—Archpriests Timothy Hojnicky, Daniel Kovalak, and John Reeves—and others. His Beatitude, Metropolitan Tikhon and His Eminence, Archbishop Michael also will join the participants to share their own experiences.

“Drawing upon the instructors’ experiences in the mission field, the program will impart practical knowledge on evangelism, mission and mission operation,” Father Eric added. “Topics include missiology and evangelism theory, creating and understanding a mission’s vision, community building, finances and stewardship, catechism and education, parish revitalization, worship, mission in a secular age, and related themes. Evaluation exercises and open discussions will round out the week-long program.”

Recordings of Mission School presentations will be made available in the near future.

SVOTS to host Orthodox Education Day Saturday, October 1

Throughout the history of the Christian Church, the Virgin Mary has been the focus of unparalleled love and devotion and the subject of fervent prayer. In this light, the community of Saint Vladimir’s Orthodox Theological Seminary here invites the faithful to their annual open house and fall festival, to be held on the campus on Saturday, October 1, 2016—the Feast of the Protection of the Mother of God.

In celebration of the life and person of the Theotokos, renowned scholar Dr. Mary B. Cunningham, author of *Gateway of Life: Orthodox Thinking on the Mother of God*, will present the day’s keynote address. Dr. Cunningham is Honorary Associate Professor in the Department of Theology and Religious Studies at the University of Nottingham, United Kingdom.

The day will be filled with liturgical services from the Eastern and Oriental Orthodox traditions, representing the diversity of the seminary’s student body. Presentations will be offered on various topics, such as the iconography of the Akathistos Icon and the ministry of All Saints Greek Orthodox Monastery, Calverton, NY, which focuses on providing services to survivors of human trafficking. A marketplace filled with international cuisine and Orthodox Christian books and gifts also will be available, as will special activities for children throughout the day.

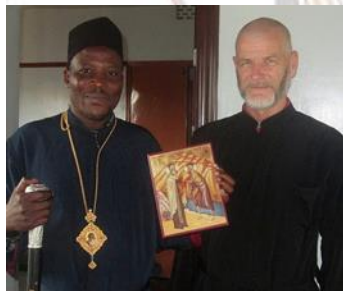
Three Hierarchs Chapel and the seminary bookstore will be open to the public throughout the day. Admission is free.

A flyer is available on the seminary web site



OCMC News - Answering the Silent Cry: Dr. Bill Black, Missionary Serving in Kenya

by Sara Staff



Nairobi, Kenya is home to more than 3 million people and has a vibrant atmosphere where the Orthodox Church is growing. Located in Nairobi is the Makarios III Patriarchal Orthodox Seminary which trains future priests to lead the ever-growing Orthodox Church in Kenya and the surrounding area. The students who attend are from all over Africa, not just Kenya. There are around 250-300 Orthodox parishes in Kenya alone, and the need for catechesis is great.

Dr. Black, OCMC long-term missionary in Kenya, teaches full time at the seminary and also at St. Paul’s University in Limuru. He is helping to train the future leaders of the churches of Kenya and all Africa so that they can bring the Gospel of Jesus Christ to their people.

Dr. Black has experienced firsthand the immense needs of the people of Kenya both physically and spiritually. On his way to work at the seminary, or during his frequent running excursions, he passes through the slums of Nairobi. It is eye-opening for him to see the state in which people live so packed together and in such dire poverty. The needs of the poor and the needs of the Church become apparent to him during his jogs through this area so affected by hardship.

There is a local priest he knows, we’ll call him Fr. ‘Andrew,’ who lives in a one bedroom shack with his wife and 4 children. The priest works as a gardener at the compound at the seminary because the parish he serves cannot pay him. Dr. Black and Fr. ‘Andrew’ have made a connection and run together every Saturday. Dr. Black gave him a pair of running shorts that he wears frequently. This man has taught Dr. Black a lot about being in Kenya – how difficult it is for people to survive and how important it is that people help one another.

Orthodoxy has grown quickly in this region, and Dr. Black is the only missionary educator serving the growing Orthodox community. As the church and the seminary grow, the need for teachers and other specialists grows. The people in the surrounding area also cry, if silently, for refuge from the present living conditions. As Orthodox Christians, we know that the only answer to the needs for education and relief of the people of Nairobi and beyond is through Christ’s Holy Church. There is a great need for the call to missions in Kenya to be answered long-term. Dr. Black and his ministry through education is impacting the Kenyan people through God’s grace, and there is a great need for more long-term assistance in this endeavor. The seminary in Nairobi is the only Orthodox institution offering theological training for priests, deacons and catechist in all of sub-Saharan Africa. The strategic opportunity to have a lasting impact on the growth of Orthodoxy in Africa is immense.

If God has placed on your heart the possibility of serving the Orthodox Church by becoming a financial partner with Dr. Black in his ministry or through long-term missionary service, please prayerfully consider the opportunity of serving in Kenya. For more information, please contact the OCMC Missionary Department by phone at 904-829-5132 ext. 121, email us at missionaries@ocmc.org, or visit our missionary inquiry page online at ocmc.org.



ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN PRISON MINISTRY
AN AGENCY OF THE ASSEMBLY OF BISHOPS

A Reflection from Fr Stephen – Why is Life Such a Struggle?

Recently, someone said in my presence: "Why is life such a struggle? Couldn't God make things easier for me?" It's true that life often is a struggle. As you ponder your own struggles, consider this story for a moment.

One day a small opening appeared on a cocoon. A man sat and watched for several hours as the butterfly struggled to force its body through that little hole. Then it seemed to stop making any progress. It appeared as if it had gotten as far as it could and it could go no further. So the man decided to help the butterfly. He took a pair of scissors and snipped off the remaining bit of the cocoon. The butterfly then emerged easily. But it had a swollen body and small, shriveled wings. The man continued to watch the butterfly, expecting that at any moment the wings would enlarge and the body would contract.

Neither happened! In fact, the butterfly spent the rest of its life crawling around with a swollen body and shriveled wings. It never was able to fly. What the man in his kindness and haste did not understand was that the butterfly, by God's plan, needed to struggle through the tiny opening. It's in the struggle that fluid is forced from the butterfly's body into the wings, making it ready for flight.

Sometimes struggles are exactly what we need in our life. If God allowed us to go through life without any obstacles, it might indeed cripple us. We would not be as strong as we could be. We would not fly. The old adage is so very true that God is more interested in our spiritual growth and formation than He is with our comfort.

May the Lord do what is necessary in our lives to enable us to one day be all that we were meant to be!! That, of course, goes for those in prison and those on the outside!

"And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, who have been called according to his purpose." - Romans 8:28



IOCC®

International Orthodox Christian Charities

IOCC Responds To Deadly Floods Inundating Louisiana Families

(Baltimore, MD) – The relentless rains inundating Louisiana since last week have stopped, but the flooding that followed has claimed at least seven lives and forced more than 20,000 people out of their flood damaged homes. International Orthodox Christian Charities (IOCC) is closely monitoring the unfolding situation in the Louisiana area and members of the IOCC Emergency Response Network, known as Frontliners, have been called on to respond as the needs emerge. IOCC has also been in contact with Orthodox and ecumenical partners, the Red Cross, and other relief partners from the Voluntary Organization Active in Disaster (VOAD) network to determine the most appropriate response.

"Our thoughts and prayers are with those impacted by this latest round of severe weather and the first responders who are actively assisting in the ongoing rescue efforts," stated IOCC US Country Representative Daniel Christopoulos. "IOCC is committed to working with our Orthodox Church community and local ecumenical partners to do our part in helping those impacted."

How Can You Help

Assemble emergency kits. IOCC anticipates the need for emergency clean-up buckets which are in low supply. For directions on how to assemble emergency clean-up buckets, please visit iocc.org/kits.

Make a donation. You can help the victims of disasters in the United States, like the Louisiana floods, by making a financial gift to the United States Emergency Response Fund. Your support will provide immediate relief as well as long-term support through emergency aid, recovery assistance and other support to help those in need. To make a gift, please visit iocc.org, call toll free at 1-877-803-IOCCÂ FREE (4622), or mail a check or money order payable to IOCC, P.O. Box 17398, Baltimore, MD 21297-0429.

About International Orthodox Christian Charities

IOCC is the official humanitarian aid agency of the Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops of the United States of America. Since its inception in 1992, IOCC has delivered \$580 million in relief and development programs to families and communities in more than 50 countries. IOCC is a member of the ACT Alliance, a global coalition of churches and agencies engaged in development, humanitarian assistance and advocacy. To learn more about IOCC, please visit our website at iocc.org.

Media contact: Rada K. Tierney, IOCC Media Relations, 443-823-3489, rtierney@iocc.org.



Living as God’s Creation Student Reflection by Spyridoula Fotinis

What do Adam and Eve in Paradise, Global Climate Change, and Great Lent have in common? ... Trees. And that’s how our weekend began.

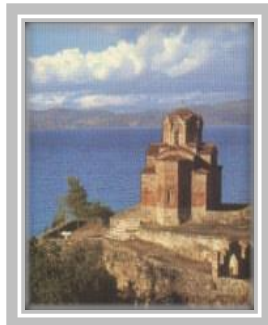
Recently, the OCF at the County College of Morris, a newly chartered OCF chapter, hosted their first Pan-Orthodox OCF/Young Adult Weekend Retreat around the topic of Living in God’s Creation. The weekend was filled with fellowship, worship, learning, and stream wading.

OCFers from different areas of NJ and out of state gathered together to learn about how to live in the world as God’s Creation. Like ourselves, all of creation is sanctified by its relationship to God. Dr. Elizabeth Theokritoff, the keynote speaker and author of *Living in God’s Creation: Orthodox Perspectives on Ecology*, had everyone explore the depth of Creation in relationship to its Creator and challenged every student to serve other creatures, animate and inanimate, the way that Christ serves us. Dr. Elizabeth said that from every tree we are supposed to pick the same fruit: God.

In a world that is riddled by the problems of global climate change and has an increasing awareness of how we as humans are treating the earth, we were reminded that Christ calls us to “love our neighbors as ourselves,” while with the same love of neighbor we must keep in mind that what and how much we are using is impacting someone else. “Turning the lights on isn’t a sin, but our actions reflect Creation as whole,” we were reminded by Dr. Theokritoff. We are called to be stewards of Creation, to view and use the resources of the world around us in awe; as the Creation of God. Elder Aimilianos challenges us “to do every task as if preparing for Holy Communion.” The Eucharist means thanksgiving and thankfulness in everything, which is the opposite of extravagance and waste.

Next time you turn on the lights or the faucet or pick a red, ripe strawberry, offer the purposeful creation up to God and thank Him for everything we have been given to use, with a sustainable heart of offering and doxology.

Spyridoula Fotinis is a student at the County College of Morris, studying International Studies. She was instrumental in starting the OCF on campus, which is flourishing and attended by people of all Faiths, even those who do not adhere to a Faith. She loves seeing the love of Christ at work on her campus and in every person around her.



Prayers by the Laker, St. Velimirovich, LXX:

Help me to be born anew, O consubstantial Trinity.

In vain do I try to clarify myself in the muddy river bed, wherein my life flows. I make a vow to You: I shall flow over dry stone, and shall no longer muddy myself. You will see Your face reflected in me, and will recognize it. Your angels will descend into me, and will not sense the descent.

Not a single willow will cast its shadow on my water, and not a single serpent will dare to enter my cool whirlpools.

Just help me to begin over again. I make a vow to You: I shall weave a new garment of new threads. I have tried long enough with my neighbors to sew new patches onto old garments. The patches fall off, the tatters fail apart, and our sordid nakedness makes us blush with shame.¹

The wise rishis beneath the Himalayas speak of new births, which they say number more than the sands of the sea. But what good are all these births to me, which serve only as a gateway for me to leave one prison to enter another?

I beseech You for one birth only, for being born of the Spirit. I was born of water and baptized with water, and am creeping over the earth like muddy water.²

Indeed, being born of water is only a prophecy of being born of the Spirit, and baptism with water is only a prophecy of the baptism with fire.³

With water we are recruited as soldiers, but with the Spirit we are made victors.

Do not permit your soldier, my Lord, to fight for a lifetime and then conclude his soldiering with defeat. Let the victor be born in me, who will not doubt even for a second that he is born for victory.

Water gives birth to an army inclined to defeat, while the Spirit gives birth to an army inclined to victory. Help me to be born anew. O consubstantial Trinity, so that there may appear in me the sort of man You had in Your mind before time. A man girded with Your strength, adorned with Your wisdom, illuminated with Your purity!

So that You might be entering my eyes, and not the world. So that my heart might yearn only for You.

And so that my soul might be impregnated by Your seed alone.

Do not abandon me, O Holy Trinity, to expire as an old man, to wear out as a threadbare garment, patched in vain and left unpatched.

The world has brought old age into my soul. It has stamped my entire soul and left its seals on her, so that from them she is suffering, agonizing, and – dying.

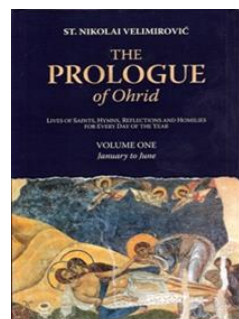
Once my soul is born anew in my bones, my bones will also be rejuvenated. And there will be only one seal in my soul -- the seal of the gift of the Holy Spirit.⁴ In vain will the world try to stamp its seal on me, to brand me as its own sheep -- it will find no place for its seal. For the one born anew will be filled with Your seal and Your life, O Life-creating Trinity.

Sayings of the Ascetics of the Orthodox Church, LXX:

**II. The Realities of the Spiritual World
The Church of Christ**

The Church is holy, although there are sinners within her. Those who sin, but who cleanse themselves with true repentance, do not keep the Church from being holy. But unrepentant sinners are cut off, whether visibly by Church authority, or invisible by the judgement of God, from the body of the Church. And so in this regard the Church remains holy.

+ St. Philaret of Moscow, Catechesis)



***The Prologue of Ohrid: Lives of Saints, Hymns, Reflections and Homilies
for Every Day of the Year***

1. The Holy Apostle Thaddaeus

This Thaddaeus was one of the Seventy Apostles, but was not the Thaddaeus who was one of the Twelve Apostles. St. Thaddaeus first encountered John the Baptist and received baptism from him; then he found the Lord Jesus and followed Him. The Lord numbered him among the Seventy Lesser Apostles, whom He sent out two by two before His face: After

these things, the Lord appointed other seventy also and sent them two and two before His face into every city and place where He Himself would come (Luke 10:1). After His glorious Resurrection and His Ascension, the Lord sent Thaddaeus to Edessa, Thaddaeus's birthplace, according to the promise He gave to Prince Abgar when He returned Abgar's towel with the image of His face on it (the Icon of the Lord "Not Made With Hands," August 16). By kissing the towel, Abgar was healed of leprosy, but not completely. [A little leprosy still remained on his face.] When St. Thaddaeus appeared to Abgar, he received him with great joy. The apostle of Christ instructed him in the true Faith, and after that baptized him. When Abgar arose out of the baptismal water, he was completely healed. Glorifying God, Prince Abgar also determined that his people should know the true God and glorify Him. The prince assembled all the citizens of Edessa before the holy Apostle Thaddaeus to hear his teaching about Christ. Hearing the words of the apostle and seeing their prince miraculously healed, the people rejected their former idolatry and unclean living, embraced the Christian Faith, and were baptized. Thus the city of Edessa was illumined by the Christian Faith. Prince Abgar brought much gold and offered it to the apostle, but Thaddaeus said to him: "Since we left our own gold, how can we receive the gold of others?" St. Thaddaeus preached the Gospel throughout Syria and Phoenicia. He reposed in the Lord in the Phoenician city of Beirut.

2. The Holy Female Martyr Bassa and Her Children: Theognius, Agapius and Pistus

Bassa was the wife of an idolatrous pagan priest, but was secretly a Christian. She educated her sons in Christianity. Her husband hated her because of her faith, and gave her and her sons over to the judge for torture. After harsh tortures, her sons were beheaded (it is believed that this occurred at Edessa, in Macedonia). Bassa was joyful when she saw her sons honorably completing their heroic martyrdoms for Christ; and she, with even greater eagerness, went from torture to torture. When they threw Bassa into the sea, angels appeared to her and brought her to an island in the Sea of Marmara, where she was later beheaded during the rule of Maximian. Thus St. Bassa was made worthy of the Kingdom of Christ in a twofold manner--as a martyr, and as a mother of martyrs.

3. Venerable Abraham of Smolensk

Abraham was born in the Russian town of Smolensk, in answer to his parent's prayers. He entered the monastic life at an early age and gave himself over to austere asceticism, emulating the ancient fathers of the desert. Later he established the Monastery of the Holy Cross near Smolensk. He endured many temptations both from demons and men with great patience and thanksgiving to God. During a great drought, Abraham brought forth rain by his prayers. Living fifty years as a monk, Abraham peacefully died in the Lord, in about 1220 A.D.

4. The Holy Forefathers Abraham, Isaac and Jacob

Abraham, Isaac and Jacob are also commemorated on the Sunday of the Forefathers before the Nativity, as righteous ones and God-pleasers.

Hymn of Praise

Venerable Abraham of Smolensk

A candle burns and clouds of incense rise:
Day and night, Abraham prays.
His neighbors, he loves as himself.
St. Abraham's body is withered
From fasting and prostrations;
His heart trembles from the name of God--
On the pages of time, eternity writes.

Sinners do not fear a sinner,
But, a righteous one, they bitterly fear.
Sinful men mock Abraham;
The envious censure him.

Mocked and censured, Abraham endures,
And for his foes, the mercy of God he implores.

Abraham guards his heart--
Kneeling in secret, shedding secret tears.
God does not judge as men judge;
The judgment of man desires to cause harm;
But God desires salvation for all--
The aristocrat and the helpless slave.
On God, St. Abraham sets all his hope,
And God glorifies him eternally.

Reflection

Magnanimous forgiveness of slanderers, and prayer for them, are characteristics of Christian saints. These do not ascribe the slanders against themselves to men, but rather to demons, the main instigators of every slander, as well as every sin in general. St. Abraham of Smolensk was slandered by the envious to the prince and the bishop, as a deceiver, magician and hypocrite. The slanderers sought nothing less than to have him burned. The prince and the bishop believed the slanderers, and Abraham was banished from Smolensk and forbidden to exercise his priestly functions. During the entire time of his investigation and trial, Abraham repeated the prayer of St. Stephen, the first martyr: *Lord, lay not this sin to their charge* (Acts of the Apostles 7:60). Later it was proven that all of the accusers against Abraham had lied. The infuriated prince wanted to severely punish the slanderers, and the bishop wanted to excommunicate them from the Church, but the holy Abraham fell on his knees before the bishop and tearfully begged him to forgive them. Abraham did not want to return to his monastery, or to exercise his newly restored priestly functions, until his slanderers were shown mercy and released.

Contemplation

To contemplate David and Saul--one who had the Spirit of God, and one who had lost the Spirit of God (1 Samuel 18 [also known as 1 Kings 18]):

1. How Saul feared David because of his virtues, yet how David was obedient to Saul in everything;
2. How Saul hypocritically rewarded David, and sent him among the Philistines so that he would be killed;
3. How an apostate from God always fears a godly man.

Homily

About the wondrous stone in Zion

"Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner-stone, a sure foundation: he that believes in it shall not be ashamed" (Isaiah 28:16).

Brethren, this wondrous Stone is our Lord Jesus Christ Himself. For if the prophet thought of it as an ordinary stone, he would not have exhorted faith in it, for thus he would have prophesied idolatry. The Prophet Daniel also speaks of a stone that was cut from a mountain, and smashed the great idol, and grew into a great mountain that filled the whole earth: Thou sawest till that a stone was cut out without hands, which smote the image upon his feet that were made of iron and clay and broke them into pieces...and the stone that smote the image became a great mountain and filled the whole earth (Daniel 2:34-35). The prophecy about the stone in Daniel is for pagans, and the prophecy about the stone in Isaiah is for Jews. The Lord Jesus Christ is that Stone which is laid: first, as the foundation of God's entire creation--for He is the Word of God and the Wisdom of God; second, as the foundation of the preparation--the Old Testament; and third, as the foundation of the fulfillment--the New Testament. The cornerstone is the firmest and strongest stone in the building; it connects and joins the other building-stones, and binds the walls in their various directions [angles], in oneness and in wholeness. If we observe the Lord Christ within us, He is the Cornerstone that binds and ties our various spiritual capabilities in unity and wholeness, so that all work toward one goal, toward God and the Kingdom of God. If we observe Christ the Lord throughout the history of mankind, He is the Cornerstone that ties and binds Judaism and paganism into one House of God--the Church of God. For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Christ Jesus (1 Corinthians 3:11),

says the Apostle of the New Testament, in agreement with the prophet of the Old Testament. Whoever has believed in that Stone of Salvation has not been ashamed. Neither will anyone ever be ashamed who will believe in it. For this Stone is a sure foundation and truly a chosen stone, a precious and honorable stone.

O Lord Jesus, our Stone of Salvation, strengthen in us that holy and salvific faith in You, our only Savior.

To Thee be glory and praise forever. Amen.



The Morning Offering – Daily Inspiration by Abbott Tryphon

Doubt

The hesitation between two positions

I once met a woman who claimed she never doubted her faith, and had never experienced even a moment when she didn't believe everything the Church taught. Within that same year, this woman had abandoned her faith, and apostatized from Orthodoxy. Her fear of harboring even a little doubt about her belief in God, and her trust in the Church's teachings, had left her vulnerable. She did not understand that although the counterpart of belief is unbelief, doubt itself must be viewed as simply a hesitation between two positions.

Doubt does not contradict faith, for it is not the same as unbelief. Doubt can, and should, serve as the catalyst to our moving deeper into the spiritual aspects of what it means to be human, and being part of a family of believers who are on a journey into the Heart of God. Faith, if it be true, challenges the status quo, and catapults us forward out of our complacency.

When we try to make doubt as unbelief, we place ourselves into a contradictory state, as though we have to choose which side we will place ourselves. Are we a believer, or are we an unbeliever? When we think we have to place ourself in one category or another, we forget that doubt, in its very essence, is a place between two positions.

This is when the physicality of the Orthodox Church comes into play, for the architecture of our temples, the beauty of our vestments, the mystery of our icons, and the smell of the incense we offer to God in our divine services, play the role of being a bridge between the material world and the spiritual realm. As we journey together, we experience a reconnection between ourselves and the God Who created us, and the Incarnation of God in our midst becomes a reality that we experience.

Orthodoxy, as this bridge between the physical and the spiritual, allows us not only to grow in wisdom, but helps us track the many different stages of spiritual development throughout the whole of our lifetime. Our lifelong journey is one that seeks to receive some level of illumination (theoria), and is not just the blind adherence to some “statement of faith”. In other words, Orthodoxy is far more than a simple adherence to our Creeds, our practices, our worship, and our doctrine.

Orthodoxy is a faith that is deep enough to allow her believers to confront the complexities of our human experience, while at the same time recognizing that not all is understood in this life, but viewed as Mystery. So, the view that believers never doubt, is simply not true. Doubt is not the opposite of faith, but rather the vehicle by which we are challenged to go deeper into the Mystery that is true faith. Nothing keeps us true believers from struggling with uncertainty, for it is this very uncertainty that keeps us from complacency. Complacency is the true enemy of faith, and the inhibitor of spiritual growth. It is complacency that keeps us from the Kingdom of God, and the joy that comes when we are in communion with Christ. It is not a question of choosing sides, but of surrendering to Divine Wisdom.

With love in Christ,
Abbot Tryphon



Daily Reflection **So That We May Be One**

“Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth. As you have sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify (ἁγιάζω) myself, so that they also may be sanctified (ἁγιασμένοι) in truth. I ask

not only on behalf of these, but also on behalf of those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you



have sent me. The glory that you have given me I have given them, so that they may be one, as we are one, I in them and you in me...” (Jn 17: 17-23)

Our Lord “sanctifies” Himself for us, that is, He dedicates Himself completely to us, making Himself ours, so that we also may be “sanctified,” or made His, “in truth.” He also gives us His “glory,” revealed to us most evidently on the mountain of Transfiguration, in the beauty of the Son, the uncreated Light of the Spirit, and the affirming voice of the Father. We, – all of us, – are given this “glory,” so that we may become capable of, and partake in, His kind of unity. Because we are utterly incapable of being “one” outside The One, the Triune God and Creator of all of us.

Today let me open up to what I have already been given; to the “glory” He has on offer, by re-connecting with Him in heartfelt prayer. Let me not walk about “in the world” aimlessly and in self-isolation, on my own. But let me be in Him, staying close to His word, so that I walk and act and speak as one “sent into the world,” as He called me to be, empowered with His humbling and unifying grace. “Come and abide in us,” O Lord, that we all may be one, as You are. Amen!

Holy Orthodox Quotes

“The Spirit of Christ is the Spirit of preparedness to suffer and bear good—naturedly all that is sorrowful.”

+St. Theophan the Recluse

2 Corinthians 1:3-7

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort,† who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also abounds through Christ. Now if we are afflicted, it is for your consolation and salvation, which is effective for enduring the same sufferings which we also suffer. Or if we are comforted, it is for your consolation and salvation.† And our hope for you is steadfast, because we know that as you are partakers of the sufferings, so also you will partake of the consolation.

Philippians 1:29

For to you it has been granted on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake,† (‘1:29 To suffer for His sake is a repeated theme in this epistle. Suffering not only bears witness to others, as Paul's chains have done (see vv. 7, 13), but also can serve to increase our faith. Suffering is a gift from Christ, as is faith: it is a participation in His grace.’ The Orthodox Study Bible - Thomas Nelson)

Philippians 3:10-11

that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.

Colossians 1:24

I now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up in my flesh what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ, for the sake of His body, which is the church,†

1 Peter 4:12-13, 19

Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you;† but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy. Therefore let those who suffer according to the will of God commit their souls to Him in doing good, as to a faithful Creator.

The Philokalia: Daily Readings

God is the cause of the virtues; and a living knowledge of God is realized when the person who has truly recognized God changes his inner state so that it conforms more closely to the Spirit.

+ St Maximus the Confessor, 500 Various Texts

Daily Readings with Early Church Fathers and Mothers

"God's Mercy" by St. Dorotheus

It is God, Who is merciful and grants everyone what he needs, Who is building him up when He gives him more than he needs; in doing so He shows the abundance of His love for men and teaches him to give thanks. When He does not grant him what he needs, He makes him compensate for the thing he needs through the working of the mind and teaches him patience.

Through the Grace of God – Orthodox Christianity

St John Chrysostom: The Holy Scriptures

"The Holy Scriptures were not given to us that we should enclose them in books, but that we should engrave them upon our hearts."

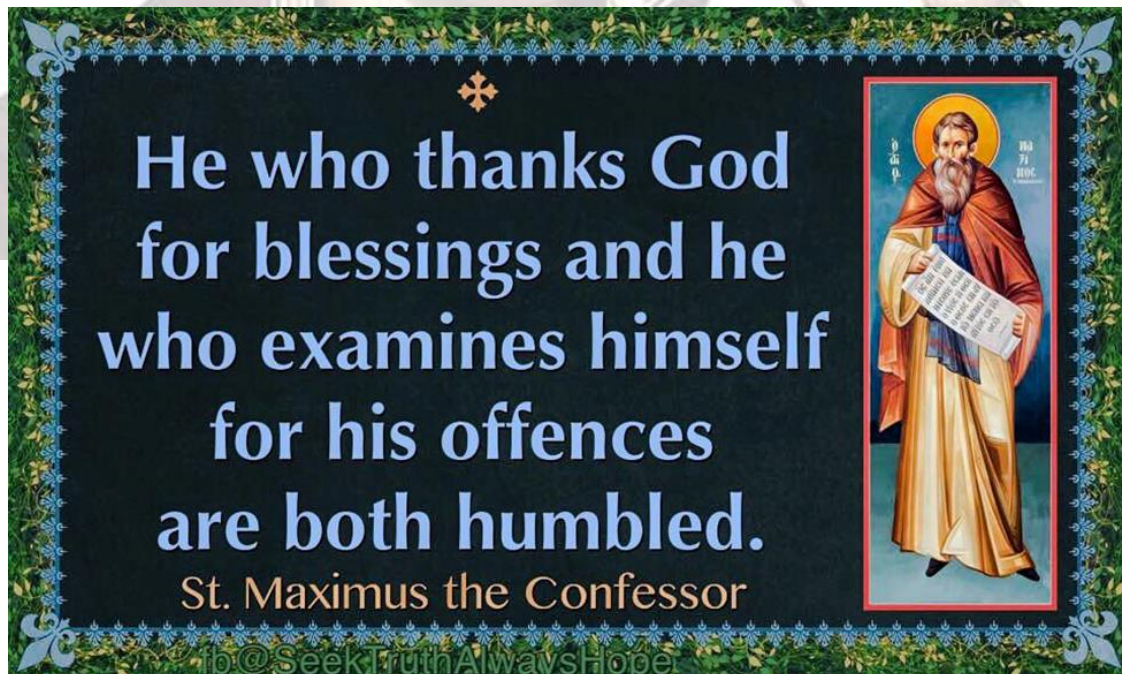
Collected Sayings of Elder Thaddeus of Vitovnica

Jesus Christ, our God, is perfect God and perfect Man. As perfect God, He encompasses all with His love, His boundless love. As perfect Man, He is dear to each soul that seeks Him. We all feel that this Divine love is somehow very far away, that God is very far away when, in fact, it is we who are moving further away from Him. He cannot move away from us, for He is life. All of Him is love. Oh, if we men could have the same love toward Him and approach Him as our only true friend! Alas, that is not how we come before Him. Instead, we are reserved, we approach Him with formality. When we pray and when we do something good, we are altogether very formal... He, in turn, wants us to be natural. When He came to dwell among us, He showed us the way to live: simply, humbly, and meekly. We should approach Him just as He created us—as innocent children.

Ancient Christian Wisdom

We must always remember that we are not condemned for the multitude of our evils, but because we do not want to repent and learn. And those who have sinned must not despair. Let that never be.

+ St. Mark the Ascetic



AUGUST – 2016

Sunday Resurrection	Monday Holy Angels	Tuesday St. John the Baptist	Wednesday Most-Holy Theotokos	Thursday Holy Apostles	Friday Life-giving Cross	Saturday Departed
<i>I am only because Thou art.</i>	1 Wine & Oil Begin Dormition Fast Blessing of Waters PROCESSION OF THE LIFEGIVING CROSS 7 Maccabean Martyrs	2 Relics Protomartyr Stephen Righteous Gamaliel 7:00-8:00pm The Grey Book Study NA Grp Mtg	3 Ven. Isaac, Dalmatus and Faustus	4 Seven Sleepers of Ephesus Martyr Eudoxia	5 Forefeast Transfiguration Martyr Eusignius Righteous Nonna 8:00-9:15pm Living Clean NA Group Mtg.	6 Fish, Wine & Oil TRANSFIGURATION OF OUR LORD AND SAVIOR JESUS CHRIST 6:30pm Vespers
7 Wine & Oil Valaam Icon Martyr Dometius Relics St. Mitrophan, First Bp. of Voronezh 9:40am Hours 9:45am Gen'l Confession 10:00am Divine Liturgy / Social	8 Tolga Icon St. Emilian, Confessor Ven. Zosima and Sawatii of Solovki	9 Fish, Wine & Oil VEN. HERMAN OF ALASKA, WONDER- WORKER OF ALL AMERICA 7:00-8:00pm The Grey Book Study NA Grp Mtg.	10 Holy Martyr and Archdeacon Lawrence of Rome	11 Holy Martyr and Archdeacon Euplus of Catania	12 Martyrs Anicletus and Photius 8:00-9:15pm Living Clean NA Group Mtg.	13 Fish, Wine & Oil Leave Transfiguration The “Passion” Icon ST. TIKHON, WONDERWORKER OF ZADONSK 6:30pm Vespers
14 Forefeast Dormition 1 Aug. O.S. Begin Dormition Fast Prophet Micah St. Theodosius- Caves 9:40am Hours 10:00am Divine Liturgy / Social	15 DORMITION OF THE MOST-HOLY THEOTOKOS	16 Fedorovskaya Icon Image of Christ “Not Made by Hands” 7:00-8:00pm The Grey Book Study NA Grp Mtg.	17 Martyr Myron Bl. Theodoretus, Enlightener of Lapps	18 Martyrs Florus and Laurus Ven. John of Rila	19 Donskaya Icon Martyr Andrew Stratelates and His Companions 8:00-9:15pm Living Clean NA Group Mtg.	20 Prophet Samuel Hieromartyr Philip, Bishop of Heraclius 6:30pm Vespers
21 Apostle of the 70 Thaddeus Ven. Avramii of Smolensk 9:40 Hours 10:00 Divine Liturgy / Social	22 Georgian Icon Martyr Agathonicus and His Companions	23 Leavetaking Dormition Martyr Lupus Hieromartyr Irenaeus, Bishop of Lyons 7:00-8:00pm The Grey Book Study NA Grp Mtg.	24 Petrovskaya Icon Hieromartyr Eutychius St. Kozma of Berat St. Cosmas of Aetolia	25 Relics of the Apostle Bartholomew Apostle Titus of the 70	26 Vladmir Icon Martyrs Andrian and Natalia 8:00-9:15pm Living Clean NA Group Mtg.	27 Ven. Poemen the Great Hieromartyr Kuksha 6:30pm Vespers
28 Wine & Oil 15 Aug. O.S. Dormition VEN. JOB OF POCHAEV 9:40am Hours 10:00am Divine Liturgy/ Social 12:15pm Council Mtg.	29 Strict Fast Wine & Oil BEHEADING OF ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST	30 Ss. Alexander, John and Paul, Patrs. Of Constantinople 7:00-8:00pm The Grey Book Study NA Grp Mtg.	31 Sash of the Theotokos Hieromartyr Cyprian, Bishop of Carthage	<i>In what ways in my life am I holding others at a distance until I am good enough/ How do I judge others as not being good enough? What effect does this have on my life? How does God see me? Who and when in my life has someone noticed me so carefully that I have felt beloved? What change resulted from this? Do I notice others in that way/ How do I celebrated and acknowledge the gift each one is/ On a daily basis am I growing more toward being wondrously grateful or toward being critically hateful?— Dn Stephen Muse, “Being bread.”</i>		