

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: Dean Inferrera



Sunday, August 27, 2017

Gospel: Matthew 19:16-26

Tone 3

Epistle: 1 Corinthians 15:1-11

12th Sunday after Pentecost: Venerable Pimen the Great

Hieromartyr Kuksha and Ven. Pimen (Pøemen), of the Kiev Caves (Near Caves—12th c.). St. Hosius the Confessor, Bishop of Cordova (359). St. Liberius, Pope of Rome (366). Ven. Pøemen of Palestine (ca. 602). Martyr Anthusa. Ven. Sabbas of Benephali. St. Cæsarius, Bishop of Arles (543).

Troparion – Tone 8

By a flood of tears you made the desert fertile, / and your longing for God brought forth fruits in abundance. / By the radiance of miracles you illumined the whole universe! / Our Father Pimen, pray to Christ God to save our souls!

Kontakion – Tone 4

The memorial of your illustrious struggles / delights the souls of the devout today, / Pimen, our venerable father, wise in God.



Venerable Pimen the Great

Prayer Requests

For Health of:

Alex Elizabeth & Morgan Grace Salcedo, on their 3rd birthday, offered by their grandfather Sub-Deacon Vlashi.

Katelin Inferrera, on her birthday, offered by her family.

Douglas Dean Inferrera 3rd, on his baptism, offered by his family.

Archpriest Stephen Mack, receiving treatment at Strong Medical Center in Rochester, offered by Archbishop Michael and the Diocese of NY/NJ.

In Memory of:

Barbara Funk, offered by Orthodox Church of the Mother of God, Archbishop Michael and the Diocese of NY/NJ.

Michael Beres, the father of Matushka Leslie Sochka and Proto-Deacon Michael offered by Archbishop Michael and the Diocese of NY/NJ.

The Philokalia: Daily Readings

The devil will fail in his purpose if we apply the counsel of the holy fathers.

- St Peter of Damascus, A Treasury of Divine Knowledge

Liturgical Schedule

Sunday, August 27th

9:40 am: Hours
10:00 am: Divine
Liturgy/Douglas Dean
Inferrera 3rd Baptism

Saturday, September 2nd

6:30 pm: Vespers

Sunday, September 3rd

9:40 am: Hours
9:45 am: General
Confession
10:00 am: Divine Liturgy

Saturday, September 9th

6:30 pm: Vespers

Sunday, September 10th

9:40 am: Hours
10:00 am: Divine Liturgy

Saturday, September 16th

6:30 pm: Vespers

Sunday, September 17th

9:40 am: Hours
10:00 am: Divine Liturgy

Saturday, September 23rd

6:30 pm: Vespers

Sunday, September 24th

9:40 am: Hours
10:00 am: Divine Liturgy

Bulletin Sponsors

*The Inferrera Family;
Sub-Deacon Vlashi*

Readings:

The Prokeimenon in the 3rd Tone:

Sing praises to our God, sing praises! / Sing praises to our King, sing praises!
(*Psalm 46:7*)
vs. Clap your hands, all ye people, shout to God with loud songs of joy!
(*Psalm 46:1*)

Epistle: 1 Corinthians 15:1-11

Brethren, I would remind you in what terms I preached to you the gospel, which you received, in which you stand, by which you are saved, if you hold it fast - unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. Then he appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me. For I am the least of the apostles, unfit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God which is with me. Whether then it was I or they, so we preach and so you believed.

Alleluia in the 3rd Tone:

In Thee, O Lord, have I placed my hope; let me not be put to shame!
(*Psalm 30:2*)
vs. Be Thou a God of protection for me, a house of refuge, in order to save me!
(*Psalm 30:3*)

Gospel: Matthew 19:16-26

At that time, a young man came up to Jesus, kneeling and saying, "Good Teacher, what good deed must I do, to have eternal life?" And he said to him, "Why do you call me good? One there is who is good. If you would enter life, keep the commandments." He said to him, "Which?" And Jesus said, "You shall not kill, You shall not commit adultery, You shall not steal, You shall not bear false witness, Honor your father and mother, and You shall love your neighbor as yourself." The young man said to him, "All these I have observed; what do I still lack?" Jesus said to him, "If you would be perfect, go, sell what you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me." When the young man heard this he went away sorrowful; for he had great possessions. And Jesus said to his disciples, "Truly, I say to you, it will be hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God." When the disciples heard this they were greatly astonished, saying, "Who then can be saved?" But Jesus looked at them and said to them, "With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible."

Orthodox Quote of the Day

By the purity of our thoughts we can see everyone as holy and good. When we see them as fools, this comes from our frame of mind.

St. Macarius of Optina



Venerable Pimen the Great

Saint Pimen the Great was born about the year 340 in Egypt. He went to one of the Egyptian monasteries with his two brothers, Anoub and Paisius, and all three received monastic tonsure. The brothers were such strict ascetics that when their mother came to the monastery to see her children, they did not come out to her from their cells. The mother stood there for a long time and wept. Then Saint Pimen said to her through the closed door of the cell, “Do you wish to see us now, or in the future life?” Saint Pimen promised that if she would endure the sorrow of not seeing her children in this life, then surely she would see them in the next. The mother was humbled and returned home.

Fame of Saint Pimen’s deeds and virtues spread throughout the land. Once, the governor of the district wanted to see him. Saint Pimen, shunning fame, thought to himself, “If dignitaries start coming to me and show me respect, then many other people will also start coming to me and disturb my quiet, and I shall be deprived of the grace of humility, which I have acquired only with the help of God.” So he refused to see the governor, asking him not to come.

For many of the monks, Saint Pimen was a spiritual guide and instructor. They wrote down his answers to serve for the edification of others besides themselves. A certain monk asked, “If I see my brother sinning, should I conceal his fault?” The Elder answered, “If we reproach the sins of brothers, then God will reproach our sins. If you see a brother sinning, do not believe your eyes. Know that your own sin is like a beam of wood, but the sin of your brother is like a splinter (Mt. 7:3-5), and then you will not enter into distress or temptation.”

Another monk said to the saint, “I have sinned grievously and I want to spend three years at repentance. Is that enough time?” The Elder replied, “That is a long time.” The monk continued to ask how long the saint wished him to repent. Perhaps only a year? Saint Pimen said, “That is a long time.” The other brethren asked, “Should he repent for forty days?” The Elder answered, “I think that if a man repents from the depths of his heart and has a firm intention not to return to the sin, then God will accept three days of repentance.”

When asked how to get rid of persistent evil thoughts, the saint replied, “This is like a man who has fire on his left side, and a vessel full of water on his right side. If he starts burning from the fire, he takes water from the vessel and extinguishes the fire. The fire represents the evil thoughts placed in the heart of man by the Enemy of our salvation, which can enkindle sinful desires within man like a spark in a hut. The water is the force of prayer which impels a man toward God.”

Saint Pimen was strict in his fasting and sometimes would not partake of food for a week or more. He advised others to eat every day, but without eating their fill. Abba Pimen heard of a certain monk who went for a week without eating, but had lost his temper. The saint lamented that the monk was able to fast for an entire week, but was unable to abstain from anger for even a single day.

To the question of whether it is better to speak or be silent, the Elder said, “Whoever speaks on account of God, does well, and whoever is silent on account of God, that one also does well.”

He also said, “If man seems to be silent, but his heart condemns others, then he is always speaking. There may be a man who talks all day long, but he is actually silent, because he says nothing unprofitable.”

The saint said, “It is useful to observe three things: to fear God, to pray often, and to do good for one’s neighbor.”

“Wickedness never eradicates wickedness. If someone does evil to you, do good to them, and your goodness will conquer their wickedness.”

Once, after Saint Pimen and his disciples arrived at the monastery of Scetis, he learned that the Elder living there was annoyed at his arrival and was also jealous of him, because monks were leaving the Elder to see Abba Pimen.

In order to console the hermit, the saint went to him with his brethren, taking food with them as a present. The Elder refused to receive them, however. Then Saint Pimen said, “We shall not depart from here until we are permitted to see the holy Elder.” He remained standing at the door of the cell in the heat. Seeing Saint Pimen’s humility and patience, the Elder received him graciously and said, “Not only is what I have heard about you true, but I see that your works are a hundred times greater.”

He possessed such great humility that he often sighed and said, “I shall be cast down to that place where Satan was cast down!”

Once, a monk from another country came to the saint to receive his guidance. He began to speak about sublime matters difficult to grasp. The saint turned away from him and was silent. They explained to the bewildered monk that the saint did not like to speak of lofty matters. Then the monk began to ask him about the struggle with passions

“Orthodox Church of the Mother of God: Joy of all the Sorrowful” founded in 1966

of soul. The saint turned to him with a joyful face, “Now you have spoken well, and I will answer.” For a long while he provided instruction on how one ought to struggle with the passions and conquer them.

Saint Pimen died at age 110, about the year 450. Soon after his death, he was acknowledged as a saint pleasing to God. He was called “the Great” as a sign of his great humility, uprightness, ascetic struggles, and self-denying service to God.



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:

OrthodoxChurchMotherOfGod@outlook.com ; reader.charles@hotmail.com or sub-deacon.vlashi@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

Baptism Celebration

Douglas Dean Inferrera 3rd

Please join us Sunday August 27, 2017

9:45 am (during Divine Liturgy)

Celebration Lunch at 1:00 pm

603 Doris Ave., Millville NJ 08332

Wisdom of the Church Fathers

"In order not to live in darkness, turn on the switch of prayer so that divine light may flood your soul. Christ will appear in the depths of your being. There, in the deepest and most inward part, is the Kingdom of God".

**Saint Porphyrios the Kapsokalivite
(1906-1991)**



NY/NJ Diocese News

NEW BRUNSWICK NJ: A NEW ERA OF OUTREACH

Saturday, 1 July 2017, was the occasion of an historic event in the life of the Diocese of New York and New Jersey: the ordination of Sub-Deacon Samuel Davis, of Somerset NJ, to the Holy Diaconate. While diaconal ordinations are not necessarily historic, Deacon Samuel is the first African-American to be ordained to this office in the history of the Diocese, and he is leading the planting and development of Saint Simon of Cyrene Orthodox Mission in New Brunswick NJ, an inner-city mission seeking to reach out to African-Americans and Hispanics with the light of Christ's Gospel in Holy Orthodoxy.

CONGRATULATIONS to:

Sub-Deacon Paul Fedoroff, ordained to the Holy Diaconate, by His Eminence, Archbishop Michael, on Saturday, August 19, 2017, at Christ the Savior Church in Ballston Lake NY. "Axios! Axios! Axios!"

Sub-Deacon Ivan V. Bazarov, ordained to the Holy Diaconate, by Archbishop Michael, on Sunday, August 20, 2017, at Holy Apostles Mission in Lansing NY. "Axios! Axios! Axios!"

Reader Paul Giokas, given the privilege of wearing the orarion and serving as a "blessed sub-deacon," by Archbishop Michael, on Saturday, August 19, 2017, at Christ the Savior Church in Ballston Lake NY.

Reader Robert West, given the privilege of wearing the orarion and serving as a "blessed sub-deacon," by Archbishop Michael, on Sunday, August 20, 2017, at Holy Apostles Mission in Lansing NY.

May God protect and preserve His servant, the newly-elevated Archpriest Volodymyr, for many blessed years! "Mnogaya Lyeta!"



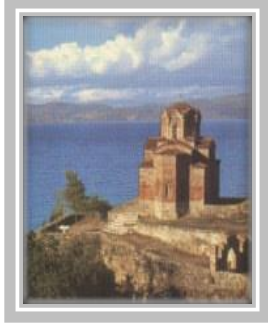
Orthodox Church in America (OCA) News
St. Vladimir's Seminary to host three September events

In addition to anticipating the opening of the 2017-2018 academic year, the faculty and staff of Saint Vladimir's Seminary [SVOTS] are looking forward to hosting three major events during the month of September.

Dr. Alice-Mary Talbot will present the Fourth Annual Father John Meyendorff Memorial Lecture on Friday, September 15, at 7:00 p.m. Dr. Talbot is the Director Emerita of Byzantine Studies at Dumbarton Oaks, a prestigious research institute of Harvard University located in Washington, DC. She also serves as Editor of the Byzantine Greek Series, Dumbarton Oaks Medieval Library. Her presentation is titled after her forthcoming book, *Varieties of Monastic Experience in Byzantium, 800–1453*. During her lecture she will highlight some of the findings of her research in two areas—the many ways one could be a Byzantine monk, and the continuing tensions in Byzantium between the eremitic (solitary living) and coenobitic (community living) forms of monasticism.

According to a 2017 Gallup Poll, the fastest growing new “religious group” in the US are the “Nones”—those who check “none of the above” when asked about their religious affiliation on surveys. They now make up nearly 25% of the US population. Moreover, one-third of the “Nones” never return to their former religious affiliations (if ever they had any) once they leave. Instead, they begin to constitute a new group, the “Dones” — done with Church and done with organized religion. To shed light upon the “Nones” and “Dones,” the seminary will be hosting a “Movie Night” on Sunday, September 24, at 7:00 p.m., featuring the newly released film, “Becoming Truly Human”. The documentary shares the stories of eight Millennials who journey from religious affiliation to non-affiliation and reveals not only their discouragement with “Church,” but also their thirst for “spirituality,” albeit disconnected from the “God” of their youth. See related story.

The seminary will be the site of a Workshop for Readers and Musicians, sponsored by the Diocese of New York and New Jersey of the Orthodox Church in America, on Saturday, September 9, from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. The workshop will address the importance of liturgical reading as participants review the Church's theology that guides and informs this ministry. They will also review rubrics and melodic patterns for reading, as well as methods for chanting the prokeimena and Alleluia verses in synergy with the choir. Participants also will receive vocal coaching and practice. Workshop activities will be taught within the framework of a supportive community of fellow readers and liturgical musicians. Archpriest J. Sergius Halvorsen, Ph.D., Assistant Professor of Homiletics and Rhetoric at the seminary and an accomplished liturgical musician, will serve as Instructor for the workshop, which has been approved for six Continuing Clergy Education credits from the OCA. Pre-register by September 4, 2017.



Prayers by the Laker, St. Velimirovich, XXI:

O heavenly Mother, receive me into Your glory. For when worldly glory is overtaken by darkness, it never dawns. And the crown that men bestow is always a crown of thorns for those who are rational and a madman's cap for those who are irrational. While gold is in the ground everyone likes it and searches for it. After it is set as a crown on a man's head, the darkness of envy and animosity blinds its radiance.

Turn me into hidden gold in Your most hidden treasury, so that no one may know about me except You. For as long as You know me I am known. As long as only people know me, my name is doubt.

Hide me from the evil eyes of the world, for they infuriate me. Keep me like a secret, that envy cannot detect. Be wiser than I, and reveal me to no one. Indeed, I used to have You like a most precious secret, and I revealed You to the world, and the world ridiculed me. For envy ridicules, when it can-not take away what it envies.

My friends, why do you partake of human glory to the point of intoxication, a glory that begins with song and ends with lying in the mire?

My friends, all the mouths that are singing your praises now know yet another, opposite song, that you will hear later.

Flee from the glory that resembles a tower built on the back of a whale, lest both enemies and friends laugh at you from the shore.

The unanimous glory that comes from men is the most in-glorious, because it is indifferent.

If your glory is a reward from the people, then you are a day laborer who has been paid off, and tomorrow the people can throw you off their fields.

Truly, no new day recognizes your contract with a day gone by. Every day opens a new field and makes a new agreement.

If your glory is the work of your mighty arms, your days will be anger and your nights will be fear.

If your glory is the work of your wisdom, wisdom will be a castration of your glory and you will be unable to move.

If you call your glory your own, Heaven will punish you for lying and stealing.

Stroll with your glory through a cemetery and see whether the dead will glorify you.

In truth, you are already strolling through a cemetery, and you are receiving glory from mobile tombs. Who will glorify you, after the mobile tombs become immobile?

You will become very sad in the other world, when you hear what those who have been glorifying you in this world really think of you. O heavenly Mother, hide me far from the eyes of men and the tongues of men. Hide me where only Your eye penetrates and only Your word is heard.

I beseech You, my Eternal Beauty!

300 Sayings of the Ascetics of the Orthodox Church, CXXI:

III. Us and Our Neighbors

Rancor

A soul that is nurtured by hatred toward man cannot be at peace with God, Who has said: If you forgive not men their sins, neither shall your Father forgive your sins (Matt. 6:15). If a man does not want to be reconciled, you must at least guard yourself from hating, praying with a pure heart for him, and speaking no evil of him.

St. Maximus the Confessor, Chapters on Love, 4.35



The Morning Offering – Daily Inspiration by Abbott Tryphon

The Church Catholic

The relevancy of the Universal Church for our youth

When a priest makes a concerted effort to relate to his young parishioners by demonstrating a real interest in their lives, discovering what is important to them, and taking the time to instruct them in the Orthodox faith, there is a good likelihood they will remain Orthodox Christians for the rest of their lives.

A major problem for many young people (as many of our youth have shared with me) is the language barrier. Most young people are simply not interested in learning Church Slavonic, just as they are not interested in studying Church doctrine on their own. Standing in long services without understanding the teachings of the Church as revealed in the services, leaves them wanting.

Priests cannot simply be liturgical functionaries, without being one step removed from wizardry. The Divine Services have to be more than form and ritual, or the Orthodox faith will remain unknown to our youth, and a personal, sustaining faith, will not be imparted to them.

We must not allow our youth see the Church as simply the preservation of ethnic culture, or the Church will be irrelevant to them, and they will leave as soon as they are out of their parents’ home.

Bishops and priests of the Church must be willing to interact with our youth, the society at large, and open to engage the young thinkers of today, demonstrating personally the relevancy of Christ’s Church as the agent for imparting healing in the hearts of her people, and bringing about healing to a culture that is falling into the abyss.

The living faith that is Orthodoxy will remain unknown if we fail to bring the Gospel message to our youth, and prevent the Church from becoming a relic of the past, and an institution relevant only for their parents and grandparents. As beautiful as the ancient liturgical languages may be, they must not be a barrier to the acquisition of faith, imparting the teachings of our Orthodox Church.



Coffee with
Sr. Vassa

Daily Reflection **Dealing with Sorrow**

“For godly sorrow (ἡ κατὰ θεὸν λύπη) produces a repentance that leads to salvation and brings no regret, but worldly sorrow produces death. For see what earnestness/zeal (σπουδὴν) this godly sorrow has produced

in you...” (2 Cor 7: 10-11a)



Whatever “sorrow” I may have today, for example, because of some loss, rejection, or disappointment (either with myself or others), it can bring me growth, or death. It is a sort of “crisis” (from the Greek “κρίσις,” meaning “decision, judgment, choice”), which stops me in my tracks or at least slows me down, demanding some kind of resolution or relief. Now, I can choose to make my sorrow “godly,” by re-focusing on God (“changing my mind” or my focus in “metanoia,” repentance), letting Him into the picture and picking up the healing instruments of my faith, like prayer, forgiveness, confession, and service to others. Or I can embrace a “worldly” kind of sorrow, say, by crawling up on the couch with some Ben & Jerry’s and listening to Adele. No offence meant to Ben & Jerry’s or Adele, God bless ‘em ☺, but in the long-term the “couch-potato”-option is not the one that “leads to salvation and brings no regret.”

Today let me try and accept any “sorrow” as a gift, or a tap on the shoulder from God, Who is calling me to slow down and re-think things, in a life-giving “change of focus.” Sorrow can help me grow in faith and also in compassion for other cross-carriers, if I don’t miss the point and choose the path of self-pity, self-isolation and resentment instead. “Lord, I have cried unto You. Hear me!” I say to God today, and place my sorrows into His hands.

Holy Orthodox Quotes

“If fear’s oarsmen do not pilot the boat of repentance over the sea of this world to God, we shall be drowned in the sordid abyss.

- St. Isaac the Syrian

Job 28:28

He said to man, ‘behold, the fear of God is wisdom, And to abstain from evils is understanding.’”

Proverbs of Solomon 1:7-8

The fear of God is the beginning of wisdom, And there is good understanding in all who practice it;† And godliness toward God is the beginning of perception, But the ungodly despise wisdom and instruction.

Proverbs of Solomon 3:7-8

Do not rely on your own discernment, But fear God, and turn away from every evil. Then there shall be healing for your body And care for your bones.

Ecclesiastes 12:13-14

Hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God And keep His commandments, For this is the whole man. For God will bring every work into judgment, Including everything that has been overlooked, Whether it be good or evil.

Wisdom of Sirach 18:26

A wise man will have the fear of God in everything he does; And in these days of sin, he will guard against wrongdoing.†

Jeremiah 5:24-25

They did not say in their heart, ‘Let us now fear the Lord our God, who gives us both the early and the late rain, according to the fullness of the season, and preserves the harvest He ordained for us.’ Your lawlessness turned these things away, and your sins withdrew the good things from you.

2 Corinthians 6:17- 7:1

Therefore “Come out from among them And be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, And I will receive you.” † “I will be a Father to you, And you shall be My sons and daughters, Says the L ORD Almighty. Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.”†

Hebrews 12:22-25, 28-29

But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels,† to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven, to God the Judge of all, to the spirits of just men made perfect, to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaks better things than that of Abel. See that you do not refuse Him who speaks. For if they did not escape who refused Him who spoke on earth, much more shall we not escape if we turn away from Him who speaks from heaven,† Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear. For our God is a consuming fire.†

1 Peter 2:17

Honor all people. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king.

Luke 3:8-9

Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance, and do not begin to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father.’ For I say to you that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones.† And even now the ax is laid to the root of the trees. Therefore every tree which does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.”

Romans 2:4-11

Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance? But in accordance with your hardness and your impenitent heart you are treasuring up for yourself wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, who “ will render to each one according to his deeds” : eternal life to those who by patient continuance in doing good seek for glory, honor, and immortality; but to those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness—indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, on every soul of man who does evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek; but glory, honor, and peace to everyone who works what is good, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For there is no partiality with God.

1 Timothy 6:9-12

But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. But you, O man of God, flee these things and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness.† Fight the good fight of

faith, lay hold on eternal life, to which you were also called and have confessed the good confession in the presence of many witnesses.†

Titus 2:11-14

For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men,† teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ,† who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works.

2 Peter 3:9

The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.†

Ancient Christian Wisdom

Why does the Lord allow people to be poor? For the same reason, amongst others, that He does not make you righteous all at once according to your wish. God might have made all men well off, even rich; but then a great forgetfulness of God would have arisen, and pride, envy, etc., would have increased. And you would have thought too highly of yourself had the Lord made you soon righteous. But as sin humbles you, showing you your great infirmity, impurity, and constant need of God and His grace, so likewise the poor man is humbled by poverty and his need of other people. If the poor were to be enriched, many of them would forget God and their benefactors, would ruin their souls in the luxury of this world. So destructive are riches, and so do they blind the spiritual vision! They make the heart gross and ungrateful!

+ **St. John of Kronstadt**

Through the Grace of God – Orthodox Christianity
Metropolitan Anthony Bloom: Weakness

“Weakness is not the kind of weakness which we show by sinning and forgetting God, but the kind of weakness which means being completely supple, completely transparent, completely abandoned in the hands of God... You could think of that [weakness] also in terms of a sail. A sail can catch the wind and be used to maneuver a boat only because it is so frail. If instead of a sail you put a solid board, it would not work; it is the weakness of the sail that makes it sensitive to the wind.”

Reflections in Christ
The Great Litany
by Fr. Lawrence Farley

At every Divine Liturgy, after the initial doxology in which the celebrant blesses the Kingdom of God and blesses with the sign of the Cross the altar table and its antimension before using it, the assembled Church prays the Great Litany. This represents the intercessory prayers of the royal priesthood, wherein the Church prays for the whole world in the Name of Jesus, standing in the gap and lifting up the whole needy cosmos to the mercy of God. Saint John Chrysostom, if taken straight from his Liturgy in the fourth century to ours, would be surprised that this was done so early in the liturgical assembly.

That is because in Saint John’s day, there were catechumens present, men and women who were not yet part of the royal priesthood (that is, the holy laity), and who were therefore not yet qualified to offer those prayers to God. Our present liturgical ordo is not the actual service as served by Chrysostom (whatever our ascription says in the final dismissal), but the service of the Byzantine Church, dating from a time after the institution of the catechumenate had died out. In Chrysostom’s day, the intercessory prayers were only offered after the catechumens had been dismissed. In the later Byzantine Church, there were no catechumens, and the only people present for the Liturgy were the baptized, since everyone had then been baptized in infancy. Thus there was no difficulty in everyone praying the intercessory prayers of the royal priesthood, because everyone present was then a part of that priesthood.

The absence of catechumens during the praying of the Great Litany stressed the nature of the intercessions as prayers offered in the Name of Jesus. Praying “in the Name of Jesus” does not mean that we end our prayers with

the verbal formula “and this we pray in Jesus’ Name,” as if it were some sort of invocational magic wand. To pray in the Name of Jesus means to pray with the authority of Jesus, with His boldness before the Father, with His access to the Father’s presence. It means, in short, praying as part of His Body. That is why catechumens could not offer those prayers, for they were not yet part of that Body. It was only through holy baptism that they became holy; only through the initiating water and the Spirit that they became part of the royal priesthood and eligible to offer the Great Litany, praying for the world with the authority of the sons of God and members of the Body of Christ. Anyone can pray, of course, and God who hears the cry of every sparrow that falls also hears the cries of Jews, Muslims, pagans, and atheists trembling in their proverbial fox-holes. But Christian intercession is different. Christian intercession is done in the Name of Jesus, with sure and certain access to the presence of the Father. Christian intercession is like no other.

In those intercessory prayers of the Great Litany we note a certain generosity of spirit and universality of concern. That is, we don’t just pray for our little congregation, or even for all the Orthodox, or even for all Christians. Instead we pray for absolutely everyone, Christian or not. We pray “for the peace of the whole world,” “for this country and its President” (or its Queen, if living in the British Commonwealth), despite the fact that many in the country are not Christian and the ruler may not be Orthodox. We pray “for every city and countryside,” regardless of how many Orthodox Christians may be in them, “for travellers by land, by sea, and by air, for the sick and the suffering,” with no concern for whether the travellers, the sick and the suffering belong to our faith confession. In short, just as God causes His sun to shine on the just and the unjust, so we also pray for everyone, regardless of their deserving. This generosity of spirit and universality of concern in prayer is intended to flow over into the rest of our lives too — just as we pray for people regardless of their deserving, so we love and give to people regardless of their deserving. We pray for travellers whether or not they are Orthodox travellers, and we give spare change to beggars whether or not they are Orthodox beggars. The Great Litany thus trains us to regard a person’s need as the primary thing, not their deserving. Their deserving and their final eternal score can be safely left with God. Our job is to pray, and love, and give.

We note too that such universality of concern is mentioned in general terms. We pray, for example, for all the sick, but do not need to know their names and ailments. If one does know the name of someone needing prayer, that is fine, but such people are generally those we already know anyway. In saner times, the individual and specific suffering we knew about were mostly those of local people — we knew about a particular beggar’s plight because we saw him in the streets — and thus could do something about it. That is a much saner approach than the one current today, where we are informed at length about the suffering of multitudes of people that we cannot really help. Through newspaper, radio, and especially the nightly news, we are inundated with stories and sound bites of suffering — multitudes left homeless from a flood in China, whole families slaughtered for their faith in the Middle East, crowds being blown up by a suicide bomber in Germany, epidemics in Britain, drought and famine in Africa. Sometimes, on rare occasions, we are given the opportunity to actually help by contributing money to relief organizations. But mostly we are simply bombarded, overwhelmed with news of suffering about which we can do nothing. No wonder our heart is worn and weighed down. We were never meant to live like this.

When story after story is read over the news detailing disasters from across the world, I sometimes want to reach into the television and seize the news anchor and demand, “Why are you telling me this? No really — why are you telling me this?” It is not because I need to know, for I can and do pray for the sick and suffering anyway without this information. It is unlikely my prayers are made more effective by the weighing down of my heart. So then why am I told this? The answer, I’m afraid, is “For the entertainment value,” though of course no one in the media would phrase it like this. It is left to the prophetic song-writers to pull the mask off our cultural dysfunction and speak the truth. Take for example the old 1982 song “Dirty Laundry” by Don Henley. Henley reveals why I am told this: “It’s interesting when people die.” The Great Litany, on the other hand, allows us to pray for the world without knowing the details. There is only one person with large enough shoulders to bear the weight of the world, and know the details, and hear every suffering cry. And He has already carried their sins on the Cross.

The prayer offered at the conclusion of the Great Litany seems not directly connected with the petitions that have preceded it, but seems to be a general sort of prayer that could be offered in any situation. In it the celebrant invokes God “Whose power is incomparable, Whose glory is incomprehensible, Whose mercy is immeasurable, and Whose love for man is inexpressible.” Note all the negative adjectives. They show that God is bigger than any words could describe (theologians call this “apophaticism”), beyond any description we could come up with, so that words almost have no meaning. Almost, but not quite — at the end of the day, we do have to say something in our corporate prayers. But by using these negative terms (“not comparable, not comprehensible, not measurable, not expressible”) we show how vast is God’s love and mercy to us. And that, when all is said and done, is why we sinners have the courage to pray and intercede at all. God allows us the vast dignity of causality, so that our little prayers become caught up in the immense tapestry of God’s will, and help work His purposes in the world.