

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, July 2, 2017

Gospel: Matthew 8:5-13

Tone 3

Epistle: Romans 6:18-23

4th Sunday after Pentecost:

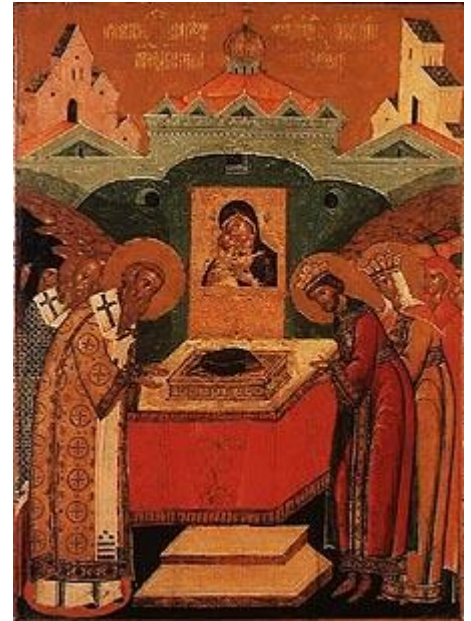
The Placing of the Honorable Robe of the Most-holy Theotokos at Blachernæ
St. Photius, Metropolitan of Kiev (1431). St. Juvenal, Patriarch of Jerusalem (ca. 458).

Troparion – Tone 8

Ever-Virgin Theotokos, protectress of mankind, you have given your people a powerful legacy: / the robe and sash of your most honored body, which remained incorrupt throughout your seedless childbearing; for through you time and nature are renewed! / Therefore we implore you: “Grant peace to your people and to our souls great mercy!”

Kontakion – Tone 4

O Pure One, full of the grace of God, / you have given your sacred robe as a garment of incorruption to all the faithful, / with it you covered your holy body, O divine protection of all mankind. / We celebrate its enshrinement in Blachernæ with love and we cry aloud with awe: / “Rejoice, O Virgin, boast of Christians.”



The Placing of the Honorable Robe of the Most Holy Mother of God at Blachernæ

Prayer Requests

For Health of:

Sub-Deacon Edward and Holly Dawson, on their anniversary, offered by their family.
His Eminence, Archbishop Nathaniel, of Detroit and the Romanian Episcopate of the Orthodox Church in America, in rehabilitation after surgery;
Archpriest Paul Lazor, recuperating from heart surgery;
Deacon John Holoduek, recuperating from foot surgery;
Matushka Myra Kovalak, presently in the Williamsport Hospital, Williamsport, Pennsylvania;
Rose Boykas, receiving medical treatment; and
Ann Bratic, having a procedure on Thursday, July 6, all offered by Archbishop Michael and the Diocese of NY/NJ.

In Memory of:

Kathleen and Joseph Sheehan, parents of Maribeth, offered by the Romanofsky family.
Protodeacon Gregory Hatrak fell asleep in the Lord suddenly, on Saturday, July 1. Our deepest sympathies are expressed to Matushka Robyn Hatrak, to the Very Reverend Father Michael and Matushka Valeria Hatrak, and all the family of Protodeacon Gregory Hatrak, offered by Archbishop Michael and the Diocese of NY/NJ.

Liturgical Schedule

Sunday, July 2nd

9:40 am: Hours
9:45 am: General
Confession
10:00 am: Divine Liturgy
12:30 pm: Sisterhood
Meeting

Saturday, July 8th

6:30 pm: Vespers

Sunday, July 9th

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

Saturday, July 15th

6:30 pm: Vespers

Sunday, July 16th

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

Saturday, July 22nd

6:30 pm: Vespers

Sunday, July 23rd

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

Bulletin Sponsors

*Dawson Family,
Romanofsky Family*

Readings:

The Prokeimenon in the 3rd Tone:

Sing praises to our God, sing praises! Sing praises to our King, sing praises!
(*Psalms 46:7*)
vs. Clap your hands, all peoples! Shout to God with loud songs of joy!
(*Psalms 46:1*)

Epistle: Romans 6:18-23

Brethren, having been set free from sin, we have become slaves of righteousness. I am speaking in human terms, because of your natural limitations. For just as you once yielded your members to impurity and to greater and greater iniquity, so now yield your members to righteousness for sanctification. When you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. But then what return did you get from the things of which you are now ashamed? The end of those things is death. But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the return you get is sanctification and its end, eternal life. For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Alleluia in the 3rd Tone:

In Thee, O Lord, have I hoped; let me never be put to shame!
(*Psalms 30:2*)
vs. Be a God of protection for me, a house of refuge in order to save me!
(*Psalms 30:3*)

Gospel: Matthew 8:5-13

At that time, as Jesus entered Capernaum, a centurion came forward to him, beseeching him and saying, "Lord, my servant is lying paralyzed at home, in terrible distress." And he said to him, "I will come and heal him." But the centurion answered him, "Lord, I am not worthy to have you come under my roof; but only say the word, and my servant will be healed. For I am a man under authority, with soldiers under me; and I say to one, 'Go,' and he goes, and to another, 'Come,' and he comes, and to my slave, 'Do this,' and he does it." When Jesus heard him, he marveled, and said to those who followed him, "Truly, I say to you, not even in Israel have I found such faith. I tell you, many will come from east and west and sit at table with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven, while the sons of the kingdom will be thrown into the outer darkness; there men will weep and gnash their teeth." And to the centurion Jesus said, "Go; be it done for you as you have believed." And the servant was healed at that very moment.

Orthodox Quote of the Day

If you bear your weakness constantly in mind, you will not
overstep the bounds of caution.

St. Isaac the Syrian



The Placing of the Honorable Robe of the Most Holy Mother of God at Blachernae

The Placing of the Venerable Robe of the Most Holy Theotokos at Blachernae: During the reign of the Byzantine Emperor Leo the Great (457-474), the brothers Galbuis and Candidus, associates of the emperor, set out from Constantinople to Palestine to venerate the holy places. In a small settlement near Nazareth they stayed in the home of a certain old Jewish woman. In her house they noticed a room where many lamps were lit, incense burned, and sick people were gathered. When they asked her what the room contained, the pious woman did not want to give an answer for a long time. After persistent requests, she said that she had a very precious sacred item: the Robe of the Mother of God, which performed many miracles and healings. Before Her Dormition the Most Holy Virgin bequeathed one of her garments to a pious Jewish maiden, an ancestor of the old woman, instructing her to leave it to another virgin after her death. Thus, the Robe of the Mother of God was preserved in this family from generation to generation.

The jeweled chest, containing the sacred Robe, was transferred to Constantinople. Saint Gennadius, Patriarch of Constantinople (August 31), and the emperor Leo, having learned of the sacred treasure, were convinced of the incorrupt state of the holy Robe, and they certified its authenticity. At Blachernae, near the seacoast, a new church in honor of the Mother of God was constructed. On June 2, 458 Saint Gennadius transferred the sacred Robe into the Blachernae church with appropriate solemnity, placing it within a new reliquary.

Afterwards, the maphorion (i.e., the outer robe) of the Mother of God, and part of Her belt were also put into the reliquary with Her Robe. This circumstance also influenced the Orthodox iconography of the Feast, in connecting the two events: the Placing of the Robe, and the Placing of the Belt of the Mother of God in Blachernae. The Russian pilgrim Stephen of Novgorod, visiting Constantinople in about the year 1350, testifies: “We arrived at Blachernae, where the Robe lies upon an altar in a sealed reliquary.”

More than once, during the invasion of enemies, the Most Holy Theotokos saved the city to which She had given Her holy Robe. Thus it happened during the time of a siege of Constantinople by the Avars in 626, by the Persians in 677, and by the Arabs in the year 717. Especially relevant for us are events of the year 860, intimately connected with the history of the Russian Church.

On June 18, 860 the Russian fleet of Prince Askold, a force comprising more than 200 ships, laid waste the coastal regions of the Black Sea and the Bosphorus, then entered into the Golden Horn and threatened Constantinople. The Russian ships sailed within sight of the city, setting ashore troops who “proceeded before the city, stretching forth their swords.” The emperor Michael III (842-867), interrupted his campaign against the Arabs and returned to the capital. All night he prayed prostrated upon the stone tiles of the church of the Mother of God at Blachernae. The holy Patriarch Photius spoke to his flock, calling for tears of repentance to wash away sins, and to seek the intercession of the Most Holy Theotokos with fervent prayer.

The danger grew with each passing hour. “The city was barely able to stand against a spear,” says Patriarch Photius in another of his homilies. Under these conditions the decision was made to save the church’s sacred objects, especially the holy Robe of the Mother of God, which was kept in the Blachernae church, not far from the shore.

After serving an all-night Vigil, and taking it out from the Blachernae church, they carried the sacred Robe of the Mother of God in a procession around the city walls. They dipped its edge into the waters of the Bosphorus, and then they transported it to the center of Constantinople into the church of Hagia Sophia. The Mother of God protected the city and quelled the fury of the Russian warriors. An honorable truce was concluded, and Askold lifted the siege of Constantinople.

On June 25 the Russian army began to leave, taking with them a large tribute payment. A week afterwards, on July 2, the wonderworking Robe of the Mother of God was solemnly returned to its place in the reliquary of the Blachernae church. In remembrance of these events an annual feastday of the Placing of the Robe of the Mother of God was established on July 2 by holy Patriarch Photius.

Soon, in October-November of the year 860, a Russian delegation arrived in Constantinople to conclude a treaty “in love and peace.” Some of the conditions of the peace treaty included articles concerning the Baptism of Kievan Rus, the payment of an annual tribute by the Byzantines to the Russians, permission for them to serve with the Byzantine army, an agreement to trade in the territory of the Empire (primarily in Constantinople), and to send a diplomatic mission to Byzantium.

Most important was the point about the Baptism of Rus. The continuator of the Byzantine “Theophanes Chronicles” relates that “their delegation arrived in Constantinople with a request for them to receive holy Baptism, which also was fulfilled.” An Orthodox mission was sent to Kiev to fulfill this mutual wish of the Russians and the Greeks. Not very long before this (in 855) Saint Cyril the Philosopher (February 14 and May 11) had created a Slavonic alphabet and translated the Gospel. Saint Cyril was sent with his brother, Saint Methodius (April 6 and May 11), on a mission to Kiev with books translated into Slavonic. This was at the initiative of Saint Photius, whose student Saint Cyril was. The brothers spent the winter of 860/861 at Cherson, and in the spring of 861 they were at the River Dniepr, with Prince Askold.

Prince Askold was faced with a difficult choice, just as holy Prince Vladimir faced: both the Jews on the one hand, and the Moslems on the other, wanted him to accept their faith. But under the influence of Saint Cyril, the prince chose Orthodoxy. At the end of the year 861, Saints Cyril and Methodius returned to Constantinople and carried letters with them from Prince Askold to Emperor Michael III. Askold thanked the emperor for sending him “such men, who showed by both word and by example, that the Christian Faith is holy.” “Persuaded that this is the true Faith,” Askold further wrote, “we bid them to baptize in the hope that we may also attain sanctity. We are all friends of the Kingdom and prepared to be of service to you, as requested.”

Askold accepted holy Baptism with the name Nicholas, and many of his retinue were also baptized. Directly from Constantinople, the capital of Orthodoxy, through the efforts of the holy Apostles to the Slavs both the Slavonic divine services and the Slavonic written language arrived in Rus.

Saint Photius appointed Metropolitan Michael to Kiev, and the Russian metropolitan district was entered into the lists of dioceses of the Patriarchate of Constantinople. Patriarch Photius in an encyclical of the year 867 called the Baptism of the Bulgarians and the Russians as among the chief accomplishments of his archpastoral service. “The Russians, who lifted their hand against the Roman might,” he wrote, almost quoting literally from the missive of Askold, “have now replaced the impious teaching which they held to formerly, with the pure and genuine Christian Faith, and with love having established themselves in the array of our friends and subjects.” (The Byzantines counted as “subjects” all accepting Baptism from Constantinople and entering into military alliance with the Empire.) “The desire and zeal of faith has flared up within them to such an extent, that they have accepted bishops and pastors, and they embrace Christian sanctity with great zeal and fervor.”

The Feast of the Placing of the Robe of the Most Holy Theotokos in Blachernae also marks the canonical establishment of the Russian Orthodox metropolitanate in Kiev. By the blessing of the Mother of God and by the miracle from Her holy Robe not only was the deliverance of Constantinople from the most terrible siege in all its history accomplished, but also the liberation of the Russians from the darkness of pagan superstition to life eternal. Together with this, the year 860 brought recognition to Kievan Rus from Byzantium, and signified the emergence of the young Russian realm into the arena of history.

The attempt of Prince Askold to renew the Christian evangelization begun by the holy Apostle Andrew the First-Called, which he intended as a religious and state reform, ended unsuccessfully. The time for the spread of Christianity in the Russian Land had not yet come. The adherents of the old paganism were too strong, and the princely power was too weak. In the clash of Askold with the pagan Oleg in 882 the Kievans betrayed their prince. Askold, lured into the camp of his enemies for talks, received a martyr’s death at the hand of hired killers.

But the deed of Blessed Askold (the Ioakimov Chronicle calls him such) was not extinguished in the Russian Church. Oleg the Sage, who killed Askold, occupied the Kiev principdom after him, and called Kiev the “Mother of Russian Cities.”

The most ancient chronicles of Kiev preserved the grateful memory of the first Kievan Christian prince: the church of the Prophet of God Elias, built by Askold and later mentioned in Igor’s Treaty with the Greeks (in 944), is on the site where the present church of this name now stands, and there is also the church of Saint Nicholas the Wonderworker, built in the 950s by Saint Olga over Askold’s grave.

The most important achievement of Askold, entering forever into the Church inheritance not only of Rus, but of also all Orthodox Slavs, is the Slavonic Gospel and Slavonic services, translated by Saints Cyril and Methodius. Their apostolic activity among the Slavs began in Kiev at the court of Askold in 861, and continued afterwards in Moravia and Bulgaria. Following Blessed Askold, in the words of the ancient Alphabetic Prayers, “the Slavonic tribe now soars in flight, all striving toward Baptism.”

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

Several outstanding works of Byzantine Church hymnology and homiletics are connected with the miracle of the Robe of the Most Holy Theotokos at Blachernae. There are two homilies of Saint Photius, one of which he preached within days of the siege of Constantinople, and the other soon after the departure of the Russian forces. Also associated with the campaign of Askold against Constantinople is the composition of a remarkable “Akathist to the Most Holy Theotokos,” which certain Church histories ascribe also to holy Patriarch Photius. This Akathist forms an integral part of the services of Praise to the Most Holy Theotokos (i.e., the “Saturday of the Akathist,” Fifth Saturday of Great Lent).

It is not only Byzantine sources that relate the events of the year 860, but also Russian historical chronicles. Saint Nestor the Chronicler, stressing the significance of the Russian campaign against Constantinople, notes that from this time “it was begun to be called the Russian Land.” Certain of the chronicles, among them the Ioakimov and Nikonov, preserved accounts of the Baptism of Prince Askold and Kievan Rus after the campaign against Constantinople. The popular commemoration of this event is firmly associated with the names of the Kievan princes Askold and Dir, although in the opinion of historians, Dir was prince of Kiev somewhat earlier than Askold.

The veneration of the feast of the Placing of the Robe was long known in the Russian Church. Saint Andrew Bogoliubsky (July 4) built a church in honor of this feastday in the city of Vladimir at the Golden Gates. At the end of the fourteenth century, part of the Robe of the Mother of God was transferred from Constantinople to Rus by Saint Dionysius, Archbishop of Suzdal (June 26).

The holy Robe of the Mother of God, which previously saved Constantinople, later saved Moscow from hostilities. Tatars of the Horde of the princeling Mazovshi approached the walls of Moscow in the summer of 1451. Saint Jonah, Metropolitan of Moscow, with constant prayer and church services, encouraged the defenders of the capital. On the night of July 2, the Chronicle relates, great confusion occurred within the Tatar camp. The enemy abandoned their plundered goods and speedily departed in disarray. In memory of the miraculous deliverance of Moscow, Saint Jonah built the church of the Placing of the Robe in the Kremlin, making it his primary church. It burned, but in its place in the years 1484-1486 a new church, also dedicated to the Feast of the Placing of the Robe of the Mother of God, was built thirty years later. This temple, standing at present, continued to serve as the primary church of Russian metropolitans and patriarchs until the cathedral of the Twelve Apostles was built under Patriarch Nikon.



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 rsub-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

The next meeting of the Sisterhood of the Protection of the Mother of God will be held on Sunday July 2nd after coffee hour.



NY/NJ Diocese News

2017 YOUTH DAY at Six Flags Great Adventure

The **Annual Diocesan Youth Day** will again take place at Six Flags Great Adventure in Jackson NJ on **Thursday, 24 August 2017**. The day is open to all Orthodox Youth and their friends, from elementary school age to college students.

CONGRATULATIONS are extended to:

Sub-Deacon **Alexander (Scott) Anderson**, ordained to the Holy Diaconate, by His Eminence, Archbishop Michael, in Saints Peter and Paul Church, Syracuse NY, on Sunday, June 25, 2017. **"Axios! Axios! Axios!"** May God protect and preserve His servant, the newly-ordained Deacon Alexander, for many blessed years! "Mnogaya Lyeta!"



Orthodox Church in America (OCA) News

STOTS Continuing Education Program considers the Liturgy of Death

This year's Continuing Education Program, held at Saint Tikhon's Orthodox Theological Seminary June 20-22, 2017, considered the theme "With the Saints Give Rest, O Christ, to the Soul of Thy Servant."

Various aspects of the theme were related in a series of presentations. Recorded excerpts from Protopresbyter Alexander Schmemmann's course on "The Liturgy of Death" provided the theological foundation for the program. At that time, Father Alexander shared that he could find no research on the services related to the Liturgy of Death. Now, a generation or two away from Father Alexander's time, clergy heard his review of the services and his effort to untangle seeming contradictions in the instructions within the services as rendered in the Hagood Service book.

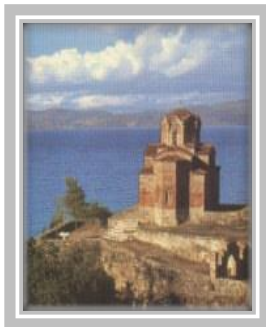
Wednesday's portion of the program focused on preparation for burial. Dr. Irene Kacandes, who was preparing for a trip to Europe and was still open to participating in the program, prerecorded presentations reflecting the ongoing work of her parish and a demonstration of the preparation for burial. Then, via Skype, participants had the opportunity to interact with her directly in following up on her presentations. In the afternoon, Archpriest Michael Senyo offered a presentation on the preparation of clergy for burial.

On Thursday, the participants were addressed by a local funeral director, Joseph Scotchlas, who was quite engaging in reflecting not only on the funeral director's work, but in clarifying how the Orthodox Christian community can engage with local funeral homes even in the process of preparing the newly departed for burial. He also shared information on preplanning and clarified various aspects of the law with regard to the burial process.

Archpriest Steven Voytovich, STOTS Dean, offered the final presentation, during which he wove together a tapestry covering patristic and other resources in reflecting on the ministry of those who suffer. He offered a review of the early Church's efforts to redirect Christian burial away from pagan practices, spoke on advanced care planning, and provided a brief reflection on the funeral services in light of the Father Alexander's research.

During the gathering, Archpriest Ian Pac Urar, Director of the Orthodox Church in America's Department of Continuing Education offered an interactive presentation focusing on preparation for and entering into retirement.

Prayers by the Laker, St. Velimirovich, XIII:



You do not ask much of me, my love. Indeed, people ask more.

I am wrapped in a thick wrapping of nonexistence that covers the eyes of my soul. You only ask my soul to take off her misty wrapping and open her eyes to You, my might and my truth. People ask my soul to wrap herself more and more thickly with heavier and heavier wrappings.

O help me, help me! Help my soul to attain freedom and lightness, to attain lightness and aerial wings, to attain aerial wings and fiery wheels.

Stories are long, too long; the moral is short - one word. Stories spill over into stories, the way the smooth face of my lake spills over from color to color. Where does the colorful overflowing of the water under the sun end, and where does the overflowing of stories into stories end?

Stories are long, too long; the moral is short-one word. You are that word, O Word of God. You are the moral of all stories.

What the stars write across heaven, the grass whispers on earth. What the water gurgles in the sea, fire rumbles beneath the sea. What an angel says with his eyes, the imam shouts from his minaret. What the past has said and fled, the present is saying and fleeing.

There is one essence for all things; there is one moral for all stories. Things are tales of heaven. You are the meaning of all tales. Stories are Your length and breadth. You are the brevity of all stories. You are a nugget of gold in a knoll of stone.

When I say Your name, I have said everything and more than everything:

O my love, have mercy on me!

O my Might and Troth, have mercy on me!

Sayings of the Ascetics of the Orthodox Church, CXIII:

III. Us and Our Neighbors

How to Deal with Those Who Hurt Us

Whoever does not fight the one who despises him, neither in word not in thought, has received true knowledge and demonstrates a firm trust in God.

St. Mark the Ascetic, Homilies, 2.119

The Morning Offering – Daily Inspiration by Abbott Tryphon

The Ancient Faith

The transformational power of a Faith unchanged



In an age when many Christian denominations are trying to appear relevant and modern, I am finding that large numbers of people are drawn to the Ancient Faith by the beard and robe. I am constantly thanked for dressing as I do by people who appreciate symbols of faith in the midst of a secular world. Many Orthodox jurisdictions that previously wanted to blend in with their Catholic and Protestant neighbors by having our clergy put off the traditional “look” of Orthodoxy, are now rediscovering the wisdom of these traditions. Now that large numbers of the clean shaven, and modern attired, heterodox clergy have been discredited in the minds of the world, due to theological and moral lapses, is there any logical reason we Orthodox would really want to imitate them?

Like so many other Orthodox clergy, I can also attest to the fact that my beard, and my way of dress, are a great aid in keeping me, sinner that I am, constantly attuned to my vocation as a monk, and as a priest. It is hard to forget your high calling when you “dress for work” each and every hour of every day. Our appearance is a constant reminder that we, as priests, have been set apart as Guardians of the Mysteries, and Servants of the Most High.

From my personal observations, I have come to believe that Orthodoxy, if it is to thrive into the next century, must adhere to the ancient traditions and roots of the faith that have set her apart from the religions. The Church must proclaim the Good News of Christ in all its purity, so that the mystical and sacramental core of her very being be clearly seen by a world that so needs this ancient, unchanging faith. The world must see by our differences that Orthodoxy offers the transformational healing that comes through the life of Christ’s Church. By clinging to her ancient, God inspired Tradition, the Church takes seriously the mystical and sacramental roots of her divinely founded self.

As we Orthodox look in amazement at the phenomenal resurrection of our Church following the fall of communism, what with the thousands of new churches being reopened, new ones built, and monasteries growing at a phenomenal rate, we will see that the twenty-first century could well be the Age of Orthodoxy. And for this to happen, we must put off everything that has brought down Western Christianity.

Accountability must be foremost in how we operate as religious institutions. Bishops and priests must be accountable to one another, transgressions against the Body of Christ must be rooted out, and the clergy (including our bishops) must serve others as humble servants of Christ, and as living icons of the Gospel message. Our co-suffering Saviour must be seen in how we serve, and in how we live, and in how we love. The transformational

power of Orthodoxy must be allowed to change the world, as the “institutional” church is replaced with the gospel vision of the Church as Hospital of the Soul.

The Orthodox Church will thrive in the twenty-first century only if we commit to being the otherworldly people we are called to be, living in the world, but not being of the world. The Church will thrive, not because she adapts to modern styles of dress, and modern trends of moral and theological thought, but because of her willingness to serve the world in imitation of the holy fathers of the Church who have gone on before us, and who refused to conform to the styles and fashions of a world that has always been in need of the unchanging Faith that has the power to transform lives, and usher the human race into communion with the Most High God.



Daily Reflection

I can't fight this feeling anymore?

“So you also must consider yourselves (λογίζεσθε ἑαυτοὺς) dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus. Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal bodies, to make you obey their passions.” (Rom 6: 11-12)



Well that’s easier said than done, some of us might say, as we dismiss this passage for all practical purposes. After all, does it really matter what we “consider ourselves,” or don’t “consider ourselves,” when it comes to sin’s “reign in our mortal bodies”? Does our perspective or view of ourselves matter, when our “mortal bodies” call to us to “obey their passions”?

Yes, perspective does matter. The words I tell myself matter, and have power. Because I, as a human being, am made up not only of the “powers” and calls of my “mortal body,” or its unreflected “emotions.” Contrary to the small violins that may play in my head and accompany my body’s call to some sin (like, “I can’t fight this feeling anymore!,” to quote a beautiful and rather-corny song by REO Speedwagon), – let’s say, regarding food, or sex, or just plain old laziness (like an unnecessary nap, or YouTube-viewing in the mid-afternoon), I do have the God-given gift of discernment and vision, of what my calling or “vocation” is in the present moment, so I can be useful to myself and others in the way that God intends for me. Whenever I choose “sin,” (i.e., “miss the mark” or my God-given purpose, which is my vocation), I must first have decided, indeed decided, to embrace a vision other than the one God has for me. I know this sounds stoic and perhaps overly rational, but I think it is true. It reminds me of a sobering point C.S. Lewis makes about human love, a state often accompanied with the small violins in the head: “But love, in the Christian sense, does not mean an emotion. It is a state not of the feelings but of the will...”

Now, I’ll agree that it isn’t easy, this whole business of having the proper perspective and corresponding direction of the will. But I can work on my perspective a bit this morning, nurturing my God-given will in some quiet-time and contemplation of God’s word. I don’t have to let all sorts of “other” purposes reign in my “mortal body,” tossing me to and fro to some unknown end. So today let me be “alive to God in Christ Jesus,” because I can be, in my baby-steps toward Him.

Holy Orthodox Quotes

“Guard your mind from self-praise and flee a high opinion of yourself.”

-St Mark the Ascetic

Romans 12:16

Be of the same mind toward one another. Do not set your mind on high things, but associate with the humble. Do not be wise in your own opinion.

The Philokalia: Daily Readings

A soldier casts off his arms when he has ceased fight; the contemplative casts off thoughts when he returns to the Lord.

- St Elijah the Priest, Gnostic Anthology

Ancient Christian Wisdom

Patiently endure the distressing and painful things that befall you, for through them God in His providence is purifying you.

+ **St. Thalassios the Libyan**

Wisdom of the Church Fathers

A prayer to the Most Holy Theotokos, by St Peter of Damascus

Blessed Queen of the universe, thou knowest that we sinners have no intimacy with God whom thou hast borne. But, putting our trust in thee, through thy mediation we thy servants prostrate ourselves before the Lord: for thou canst freely approach Him since He is thy son and our God. Thus I, too, unworthy believer that I am, entreat thee, holy Queen, that I may be allowed to perceive the gifts of grace bestowed on thee and on the other saints, and to understand how thou dost display so many virtues. Simply thy giving birth to the Son of God shows that thou excellest all other beings. For He Who, as creator of all, knows all things before they come into existence, found thy womb worthy of His indwelling.

