

Orthodox Church of the Mother of God

OCA – Diocese of New York-New Jersey

V. Rev. Dr. Matthew Searfoorce, Rector

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Parish Council President: Trudy Ellmore

Parish Council Vice President: Holly Dawson



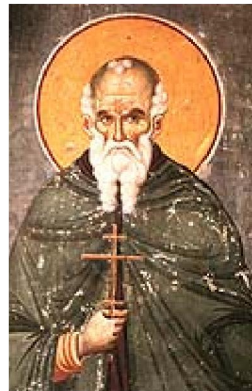
Sunday, July 5, 2015

Gospel: Matthew 8:28-9:1

Tone 4

Epistle: Romans 10:1-10

5th Sunday after Pentecost; Venerable Athanasius the Founder of the Great Lavra and Coenobitic Monasticism on Mt. Athos; Uncovering of the relics of the Venerable Sergius of Radonezh



Venerable Athanasius

***Glory to
Jesus Christ!***

***Glory
Forever!***

*From your youth you received Christ into your soul, O venerable one,
and above all desired to leave behind the turmoil of the world.*

*You courageously settled in the wilderness,
where you raised children in obedience, the fruits of humility.*

*Thus, as an abode of the Trinity,
you enlightened all who approached in faith and granted healing to all.
Our Father Sergius, pray to Christ God that our souls may be saved.*

Today the Church Remembers

5th Sunday After Pentecost — Tone 4. Ven. Athanasius, Founder of the Great Lavra and Cœnobitic Monasticism on Mt. Athos, and his six disciples (1000). Uncovering of the Relics of Ven. Sergius (Sérgii) of Rádonezh (1422). Martyr Anna at Rome (304) and Martyr Cyrilla, of Cyrene in Libya, a widow (304). Ven. Lampadus of Hirenopolis (10th c.). Hieromartyr Cyprian of Mt. Athos (1679).

Weekly Bulletin Sponsors

For Health of:

Lore Stefy on her birthday; offered by her children Walter Stefy, Natalie Morris, & Lisa Matthew.

Amy on her birthday; offered by her parents Andrew and Maribeth.

Liturgical Schedule:

Sunday, July 5th

9:40 am: Hours

10:00 am: Divine Liturgy

Saturday, July 11th

6:30 pm: Vespers

Sunday, July 12th

9:40 am: Hours

10:00 am: Divine Liturgy

Saturday, July 18th

6:30 pm: Vespers

Sunday, July 19th

9:40 am: Hours

10:00 am: Divine Liturgy

Readings:

Epistle: Romans 10:1-10

Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for them is that they may be saved. I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but it is not enlightened. For, being ignorant of the righteousness that comes from God, and seeking to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness. For Christ is the end of the law, that every one who has faith may be justified. Moses writes that the man who practices the righteousness which is based on the law shall live by it. But the righteousness based on faith says, Do not say in your heart, "Who will ascend into heaven?" (that is, to bring Christ

down) or "Who will descend into the abyss?" (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead). But what does it say? The word is near you, on your lips and in your heart (that is, the word of faith which we preach); because, if you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For man believes with his heart and so is justified, and he confesses with his lips and so is saved.

Gospel: Matthew 8:28-9:1

At that time, when Jesus came to the other side, to the country of the Gergesenes, two demoniacs met him, coming out of the tombs, so fierce that no one would pass that way. And behold, they cried out, "What have you to do with us, O Son of God? Have you come here to torment us before the time?" Now a herd of many swine was feeding at some distance from them. And the demons begged him, "If you cast us out, send us away into the herd of swine." And he said to them, "Go." So they came out and went into the swine; and behold, the whole herd rushed down the steep bank into the sea, and perished in the waters. The herdsmen fled, and going into the city they told everything, and what had happened to the demoniacs. And behold, all the city came out to meet Jesus; and when they saw him, they begged him to leave their neighborhood. And getting into a boat he crossed over and came to his own city.



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 and \$2 for a small one.

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

Bulletin@ChurchMotherOfGod.org

Volunteers are needed to clean the church. Please use the sign-up sheet on the bulletin board downstairs or candle stand, to indicate when you can help.

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

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: Parish News **Coming Events for Your Calendar**

August 20, 2015
Orthodox Youth Day
Nativity of the Virgin Mary Church, Jackson, NJ

Six Flags Great Adventure

August 23, 2015
NJ Deanery Clergy Family Picnic

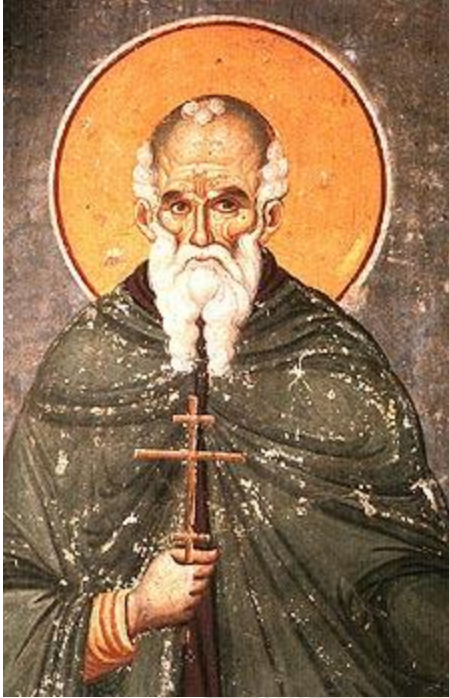
September 2-3, 2015
Clergy Conference
Assumption of the Virgin Church, Clifton, NJ



Sisterhood of the Protector of the Mother of God News

There will be a Sisterhood meeting today, July 5th after Divine Liturgy and coffee hour downstairs in the community room.

***Venerable Athanasius the Founder of
the Great Lavra and Coenobitic
Monasticism on Mt. Athos***



Saint Athanasius of Athos, in holy Baptism named Abraham, was born in the city of Trebezond. He was orphaned at an early age, and being raised by a certain good and pious nun, he imitated his adoptive mother in the habits of monastic life, in fasting and in prayer. Doing his lessons came easily and he soon outpaced his peers in study.

After the death of his adoptive mother, Abraham was taken to Constantinople, to the court of the Byzantine emperor Romanus the Elder, and was enrolled as a student under the renowned rhetorician Athanasius. In a short while the student attained the mastery of skill of his teacher and he himself became an instructor of youths. Reckoning as the true life that of fasting and vigilance, Abraham led a strict and abstinent life, he slept little and then only sitting upon a stool, and barley bread and water were his nourishment. When his teacher Athanasius through human weakness became jealous of his student, blessed Abraham gave up his teaching position and went away.

During these days there had arrived at Constantinople St Michael Maleinos (July 12), igumen of the Kyminas monastery. Abraham told the igumen about his life, and revealed to him his secret desire to become a monk. The holy Elder, discerning in Abraham a chosen vessel of the Holy Spirit, became fond of him and taught him much in questions of salvation. One time during their spiritual talks St Michael was visited by his nephew, Nicephorus Phocas, a military officer and future emperor. Abraham's lofty spirit and profound mind impressed Nicephorus, and all his life he regarded the saint with reverent respect and with love. Abraham was consumed by his zeal for the monastic life. Having forsaken everything, he went to the Kyminas monastery and, falling down at the feet of the holy igumen, he begged to be received into the monastic life. The igumen fulfilled his request with joy and tonsured him with the name Athanasius.

With long fasts, vigils, bending of the knees, with works night and day Athanasius soon attained such perfection, that the holy igumen blessed him for the exploit of silence in a solitary place not far from the monastery. Later on, having left Kyminas, he made the rounds of many desolate and solitary places, and guided by God, he came to a place called Melanos, at the very extremity of Athos, settling far off from the other monastic dwellings. Here the monk made himself a cell and began to live an ascetical life in works and in prayer, proceeding from exploit to exploit towards higher monastic attainment.

The enemy of mankind tried to arouse in St Athanasius hatred for the place chosen by him, and assaulted him with constant suggestions in thought. The ascetic decided to suffer it out for a year, and then wherever the Lord should direct him, he would go. On the last day of this year's length of time, when St Athanasius set about to prayer, a heavenly light suddenly shone upon him, filling him with an indescribable joy, all the thoughts dissipated, and from his eyes welled up graced tears. From that moment St Athanasius received the gift of tenderness, and he became as strongly fond of the place of his solitude as he had formerly loathed it.

During this time Nicephorus Phocas, having had enough of military exploits, remembered his vow to become a monk and from his means he besought St Athanasius to build a monastery, i.e., to build cells for him and the brethren, and a church where the brethren could commune of the Divine Mysteries of Christ on Sundays.

Tending to shun cares and worries, St Athanasius at first would not agree to accept the hateful gold, but seeing the fervent desire and good intent of Nicephorus, and discerning in this the will of God, he set about the building of the monastery. He built a large church in honor of the holy Prophet and Forerunner of Christ, John the Baptist, and another church at the foot of a hill, in the name of the Most Holy Theotokos. Around the church were the cells, and a wondrous monastery arose on the Holy Mountain. In it were a trapeza (dining area), a hospice for the sick and for taking in wanderers, and other necessary structures.

Brethren flocked to the monastery from everywhere, not only from Greece, but also from other lands, simple people and illustrious dignitaries, desert-dwellers having labored in asceticism for long years in the wilderness, igumens from many monasteries and hierarchs wanting to become simple monks in the Athos Lavra of St Athanasius.

The saint established at the monastery a cenobitic monastic Rule on the model of the old Palestinian monasteries. Divine services were served with all strictness, and no one was so bold as to talk during the services, nor to come late or leave the church without necessity.

The Heavenly Patroness of Athos, the All-Pure Mother of God Herself, was graciously disposed towards the saint. Many times he was privileged to see Her with his own eyes. By God’s dispensation, there once occurred such a hunger, that the monks one after the other quit the Lavra. The saint remained all alone and, in a moment of weakness, he also considered leaving. Suddenly he beheld a Woman beneath an ethereal veil, coming to meet him. “Who are you and where are you going?” She asked quietly. St Athanasius from an innate deference halted. “I am a monk from here,” St Athanasius replied, and spoke about himself and his worries.

“Would you forsake the monastery which was intended for glory from generation unto generation, just for a morsel of dry bread? Where is your faith? Turn around, and I shall help you.” “Who are you?” asked Athanasius. “I am the Mother of the Lord,” She answered, and bid Athanasius to strike his staff upon a stone. From the fissure there gushed forth a spring of water, which exists even now, in remembrance of this miraculous visitation.

The brethren grew in number, and the construction work at the Lavra continued. St Athanasius, foreseeing the time of his departure to the Lord, prophesied about his impending end and besought the brethren not to be troubled over what he foresaw. “For Wisdom disposes otherwise than as people judge.” The brethren were perplexed and pondered the words of the saint. After giving the brethren his final guidance and comforting all, St Athanasius entered his cell, put on his mantiya and holy kukolion (head covering), which he wore only on great feasts, and emerged after prolonged prayer. Alert and joyful, the holy igumen went up with six of the brethren to the top of the church to inspect the construction. Suddenly, through the imperceptible will of God, the top of the church collapsed. Five of the brethren immediately gave up their souls to God. St Athanasius and the architect Daniel, thrown upon the stones, remained alive. All heard the saint call out to the Lord, “Glory to Thee, O God! Lord, Jesus Christ, help me!” The brethren with great weeping began to dig out their father from the rubble, but they found him already dead.

Patristic Wisdom for Daily Living with the Church Fathers:

Believe—it’s the rational thing

St. Athanasius, the great defender of orthodoxy, tells us that the faith of the martyrs is strong proof of the truth of Christianity. Take up the faith, he says, and you will understand what the martyrs know.

Is this such a little proof of the weakness of death? When young boys and girls who are in

Christ despise this life, and practice to die, is that such a little proof of the victory won over death by the Savior?

Now, man is afraid of death by nature, afraid of the decay of the body. But here is a really startling fact: whoever has put on the faith of the Cross despises even what is naturally dreadful, and for Christ’s sake is not afraid of death.

So if anyone is skeptical even now, after so many proofs, and after so many have become martyrs to Christ, and after those who are champions in Christ have shown scorn for death every day—if his mind is still doubtful about whether death has been brought to nothing and come to an end—well, he’s right to wonder at such a great thing. But he should not be stubborn in his skepticism, or cynical in the face of what is so obvious.

Let him who is skeptical about the victory over death receive the faith of Christ, and come over to his teaching. Then he will see how weak death is, and the triumph over it. Many who used to be skeptics and scoffers have later believed, and despised death even enough to become martyrs for Christ himself.

—St. Athanasius, *On the Incarnation of the Word*, 28

In God’s Presence, consider....

Am I still afraid of death?

When people outside the faith look at me, what do they learn about death?

Closing Prayer:

Father, I thank you for the salvation you have given me through our Lord Jesus Christ. I pray you nin your mercy to grant that I may have faith that is not ashamed, love that is unfeigned, and the power to keep your caommandments.

Prayers by the Lake, St. Nikolai Velimirovich, XII:

Anoint my heart with the oil of Your mercy, my most merciful Lord.

May neither anger against the strong nor scorning of the weak ever erupt in my heart! For everything is weaker than the morning dew.

May hatred never make a nest in my heart against those who plot evil against me, so that I may be mindful of their end and be at peace.

Mercifulness opens the way to the heart of all creatures, and brings joy. Mercilessness brings fog to the fore, and creates a cramped isolation.

Have mercy on Your merciful servant, most Tender Hand, and reveal to me the mystery of Your mercy.

The Ultimate Man is the child of the Father's mercy and the Spirit's light.

All creation is merely a story about Him. The mighty suns in the heavens and the smallest drops of water in the lake cany in themselves one part of the story about Him. All the builders of heaven and earth, from the exceedingly mighty seraphim to rulers and the tiniest particle of dust, tell the very same story about Him, their fore-essence and fore-source.

What are all the things on the earth and the moon except the sun in stories? Truly, in this way all visible and invisible creation is the Ultimate Man in stories. Essence is simple, but there is no end or number to the stories about essence.

My neighbors, how can I tell you about essence, when you do not even understand stories.

Ah if you only knew how great the sweetness, the expanse, and the strength are, when one reaches the bottom of all thestories—there, where the stories begin and where they end. There, where the tongue is silent and where everything is told at once!

How boring all the lengthy and tedious stories of creatures become then! Truly, they become just as boring as it is for one who is accustomed to seeing lightning to hear stories about lightning.

Receive me into Yourself, O Only-Begotten Son, so that I may be one with You as I was before creation and the Fall.

Let my long and weary story about You end with a moment's vision of You. Let my self-deception die, that would have me think that I am something without You, that I am something else outside of You.

My ears are stuffed with stories. My eyes no longer seek to see any display of clothing but You, my essence, overlaid with stories and clothing.

Sayings of the Ascetics of the Orthodox Church

God and Us – How do we relate God?

Always have the fear of God in your heart, and remember that God is always with you, everywhere, whether you are walking or sitting.

St. Gennadius of Constantinople, The Golden Chain, 14

The Prologue of Ohrid *St. Nikolai Velimirovic*

Reflection

By striking the rod, how did Moses bring forth water from the rock? How did God send down manna from heaven and feed the people of Israel in the wilderness? Thus, ask all those who have a very weak conception of the might of the Omnipotent God. And still they are perplexed why such miracles do not take place again in order that all peoples may believe in God. But the Israelites, with their own eyes, witnessed countless miracles of God and still they did not believe. Meanwhile, God repeats the old great miracles wherever and whenever it is needed. One time, when a famine ensued in the Lavra of Athanasius, all of the brethren dispersed wherever. Dejected, Athanasius began to move about and to seek out another place. A lady on the road asked him: "Where are you going?" "Who are you?" Athanasius asked, bewildered,

because he sees a woman on the Holy Mountain, where access to women is not permitted. "I am she to whom you have dedicated your community. I am the Mother of your Lord." Athanasius said: "I am afraid to trust you, for even demons can manifest themselves into angels of light. With what shall you prove to me the truthfulness of your words?" Then the Holy Birth-giver of God said to him: "Strike your rod upon this rock and you will know who I am that speaks to you. Know that I am always remaining the Abbess - Ikonomisa of your Lavra." Athanasius then struck the rock with his rod. At that moment the rock shook and cracked as thunder and water gushed forth from the shattered rock. Frightened, Athanasius turned so as to prostrate before the Holy All-pure One but She had already vanished. He returned to his Lavra and even to his greater amazement, found all the barns (storehouses) overflowing with wheat. Here, then, is a repetition of the great miracles by which the miracles of old are confirmed and by which the faithful are strengthened in the Faith.

Contemplation

To contemplate the miraculous crossing of the Israelites across the Red Sea (Exodus 14):

1. How Moses waved the rod according to the command of God and the sea was divided and the people of God passed over on the dry bottom of the sea;
2. How the Egyptians pursued the Israelites along the same path but Moses waved the rod and the sea came together;
3. How this teaches me that whatever He wills, all is possible with God and that He saves His faithful servant from the greatest danger and punishes the unfaithful.

Homily:

About the sobriety of the mind

"Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 1:13).

Brethren, the mind is the guide of the soul and the advisor to the soul. God gave only a soul to the animals [an irrational soul]; that is why He did not give them freedom but guides them with His mind. God gave man a soul [a rational soul] and mind and with the mind, freedom. The mind and freedom are inseparable. From this, are all the empty tales of certain philosophers concerning how man truly has a mind but does not possess freedom. For it is clear from daily experience that freedom is an inseparable companion of the mind. But, as man does not possess a perfect mind, so he does not possess perfect freedom but, nevertheless, stands under the direction and guidance of God. God alone has a perfect mind and perfect freedom. We, therefore, are only the "image and likeness" of the mind and the freedom of God. We possess a sufficient enough mind that we may know the will of God and enough freedom that we can decide to fulfill the will of God. When the mind loses the absolute guiding power over the soul then, what follows in the soul is many guiding principles which result in the confusion, chaos and destruction.

What do the words of the apostle mean: "gird up the loins of your mind and be sober"? They mean: do not allow your mind to fantasize but concentrate the mind on the contemplation on the law of God. They also mean: do not allow your mind to abuse the God-given freedom of plunging the soul into the slavery of the flesh, the world and the devil, but nail the mind to Christ as to a cross so that your soul may resurrect in Christ. Further they mean: close your mind off from all self-willed imaginations from which it becomes intoxicated and falls into the booty of the devil and keep the mind girded in the narrowness of your heart where it will become sober through prayer and become pure through tears. Briefly, it means: exercise your mind not to abuse your freedom by ridiculing the Living and Merciful God and deadening the soul by passions.

O Lord Jesus, the Mind of God and the Wisdom of God, help us to gird our mind so that it would think only of what is from You and that what is Yours, so that the mind would lead our soul soberly to salvation.

To You be glory and thanks always. Amen.

