

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

Orthodox Church of the Mother of God

OCA – Diocese of New York-New Jersey

V. Rev. Dr. Matthew Searfoorce, Rector

Sub-Deacon Edward Dawson

Sub-Deacon Vlashi

Parish Council President: Andrew Romanofsky

Parish Council Vice President: Holly Dawson



Sunday, March 26, 2017

Gospel: Mark 9:17-31

Feast: Luke 1:24-38

Tone 7

Epistle: Hebrews 6:13-20

Feast: Hebrews 2:11-18

4th Sunday of Great Lent: St John Climacus (of the Ladder); Leavetaking of the Annunciation

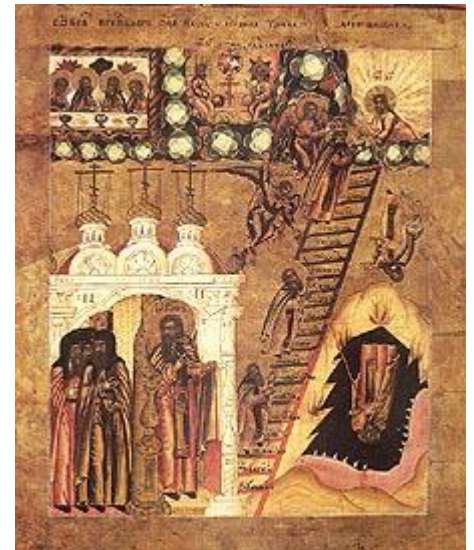
Synaxis of the Archangel Gabriel. Hieromartyr Irenæus, Bishop of Sirmium (304). Martyrs Bathusius and Bercus—Presbyters, Arpilus—Monk, Abibus, Agnus, Reasus, Igathrax, Iscoeus (Iskous), Silas, Signicus, Sonirilus, Suimbalus, Thermus, Phillus (Philgas)—laymen, and the women: Anna, Alla, Larissa, Monco (Manca), Uirko (Virko), Animais (Animaida), Gaatha and Duklida, in the Crimea (375). St. Malchus of Chalcis in Syria (4th c.). Ven. Basil the New, Anchorite, near Constantinople (10th c.). Martyr Montanus, Presbyter, of Singidunum, and his wife, Maxima (235).

Troparion – Tone 1

Dweller of the desert and angel in the body, / you were shown to be a wonder-worker, our God-bearing Father John. / You received heavenly gifts through fasting, vigil, and prayer: / healing the sick and the souls of those drawn to you by faith. / Glory to Him who gave you strength! / Glory to Him who granted you a crown! / Glory to Him who through you grants healing to all!

Kontakion – Tone 4

The Lord truly set you on the heights of abstinence, / to be a guiding star, showing the way to the universe, / O our Father and Teacher John.



4th Sunday of Great Lent: St John Climacus (of the Ladder)

Prayer Requests

For Health of:

Gabrielle Guedes, on her name day, offered by her Godmother Trudy Ellmore.

Michael, on his birthday, offered by his mother-in-law Trudy Ellmore.

Josh, on his 3rd birthday, offered by his family.

Jim Matthews, offered by his mother-in-law Lore Stefy.

Nicholas Zimmerman, on his 19th birthday, offered with love by his family.

Juliana Prifti (Home of Hope), on her birthday, offered by Sub-Deacon Vlashi.

Archpriest Daniel Skvir, presently hospitalized in Princeton, New Jersey, offered by Archbishop Michael and the Diocese of NY/NJ.

In Memory of:

Olga Romanofsky offered by her son Andrew and family.

Liturgical Schedule

Sunday, March 26th

9:30 am: Sunday School
9:40 am: Hours
10:00 am: Divine Liturgy
12:00 pm: Parish Council Meeting

Wednesday, March 29th

6:30 pm: Liturgy/
Presanctified Gifts

Saturday, April 1st

6:30 pm: Vespers

Sunday, April 2nd

9:30 am: No Sunday School
9:40 am: Hours
9:45 am: General Confession
10:00 am: Divine Liturgy

Wednesday, April 5th

6:30 pm: Liturgy/
Presanctified Gifts

Saturday, April 8th

6:30 pm: Vespers

Sunday, April 9th

9:40 am: Hours
9:45 am: General Confession

Bulletin Sponsors

***Trudy Ellmore;
Searfoorce Family; Lore
Stefy; Andrew
Romanofsky & Family;
Zimmerman Family***

Readings:

The Prokeimenon in the 7th Tone:

The Lord shall give strength to His people. / The Lord shall bless His people with peace.
(*Psalm 28:11*)
vs. Offer to the Lord, O ye sons of God! Offer young rams to the Lord!
(*Psalm 28:1*)

Another, Tone 4 (Feast):

From day to day proclaim the salvation of our God! (*Psalm 95:2*)

Epistle: Hebrews 6:13-20

Brethren, when God made a promise to Abraham, since he had no one greater by whom to swear, he swore to himself, saying, "Surely I will bless you and multiply you." And thus Abraham, having patiently endured, obtained the promise. Men indeed swear by a greater than themselves, and in all their disputes an oath is final for confirmation. So when God desired to show more convincingly to the heirs of the promise the unchangeable character of his purpose, he interposed with an oath, so that through two unchangeable things, in which it is impossible that God should prove false, we who have fled for refuge might have strong encouragement to seize the hope set before us. We have this as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters into the inner shrine behind the curtain, where Jesus has gone as a forerunner on our behalf, having become a high priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek.

Feast: Hebrews 2:11-18

Brethren, both He who sanctifies and those who are being sanctified are all of one, for which reason He is not ashamed to call them brethren, saying: "I will declare Your name to My brethren; in the midst of the assembly I will sing praise to You." And again: "I will put My trust in Him." And again: "Here am I and the children whom God has given Me." In as much then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. For indeed He does not give aid to angels, but He does give aid to the seed of Abraham. Therefore, in all things He had to be made like His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted.

Alleluia in the 7th Tone:

It is good to give thanks to the Lord, to sing praises to Thy Name, O Most High.
(*Psalm 91:2*)
vs. To declare Thy mercy in the morning, and Thy truth by night.
(*Psalm 91:3*)

Another, Tone 1 (Feast):

He descends like rain upon the fleece, like raindrops that water the earth.
(*Psalm 71:6*)

Gospel: Mark 9:17-31

At that time, a man came to Jesus kneeling and saying: "Teacher, I brought my son to you, for he has a dumb spirit; and wherever it seizes him it dashes him down; and he foams and grinds his teeth and becomes rigid; and I asked your disciples to cast it out, and they were not able." And he answered them, "O faithless generation, how long am I to be with you? How long am I to bear with you? Bring him to me." And they brought the boy to him; and when the spirit saw him, immediately it convulsed the boy, and he fell on the ground and rolled about, foaming at the mouth. And Jesus asked his father, "How long has he had this?" And he said, "From childhood. And it has often cast him into the fire and into the water, to destroy him; but if you can do anything, have pity on us and help us." And Jesus said to him, "If you can! All things are possible to him who believes." Immediately the father of the child cried out and said, "I believe; help my unbelief!" And when Jesus saw that a crowd came running together, he rebuked the unclean spirit, saying to it, "You dumb and deaf spirit, I command you, come out of him, and never enter him again." And after crying out and convulsing him terribly, it came out, and the boy was like a corpse; so that most of them said, "He is dead." But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him up, and he arose. And when he had entered the house, his disciples asked him privately, "Why could we not cast it out?" And he said to them, "This kind cannot be driven out by anything but prayer and fasting." They went on from there and passed through Galilee. And he would not have any one know it; for he was teaching his disciples, saying to them, "The Son of man will be delivered into the hands of men, and they will kill him; and when he is killed, after three days he will rise."

Feast: Luke 1: 24-38

Now after those days his wife Elizabeth conceived; and she hid herself five months, saying, Thus the Lord has dealt with me, in the days when He looked on me, to take away my reproach among people. Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. And having come in, the angel said to her, "Rejoice, highly favored one, the Lord is with you; blessed are you among women!" But when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and considered what manner of greeting this was. Then the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name JESUS. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David. And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end." Then Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I do not know a man?" And the angel answered and said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God. Now indeed, Elizabeth your relative has also conceived a son in her old age; and this is now the sixth month for her who was called barren. For with God nothing will be impossible." Then Mary said, "Behold the maidservant of the Lord! Let it be to me according to your word." And the angel departed from her.



4th Sunday of Great Lent: St John Climacus (of the Ladder)

The Fourth Sunday of Lent is dedicated to Saint John of the Ladder (Climacus), the author of the work, The Ladder of Divine Ascent. The abbot of Saint Catherine's Monastery on Mount Sinai (6th century) stands as a witness to the violent effort needed for entrance into God's Kingdom (Mt.10: 12). The spiritual struggle of the Christian life is a real one, "not against flesh and blood, but against ... the rulers of the present darkness ... the hosts of wickedness in heavenly places ..." (Eph 6:12). Saint John encourages the faithful in their efforts for, according to the Lord, only "he who endures to the end will be saved" (Mt.24:13).



4th Sunday of Great Lent: Leavetaking of the Annunciation

On the Leavetaking of the Feast of the Annunciation, the Church commemorates the Archangel Gabriel, who announced the great mystery of the Incarnation of Christ to the Virgin Mary. There is no period of Afterfeast due to Great Lent.

Troparion – Tone 4

Today is the beginning of our salvation, / The revelation of the eternal mystery! / The Son of God becomes the Son of the Virgin / As Gabriel announces the coming of Grace. / Together with him let us cry to the Theotokos: / Rejoice, O Full of Grace, / The Lord is with You!

Kontakion – Tone 8

O Victorious Leader of Triumphant Hosts! / We, your servants, delivered from evil, sing our grateful thanks to you, O Theotokos! / As you possess invincible might, set us free from every calamity / So that we may sing: Rejoice, O unwedded Bride!



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

Our Church Cleanup Day this year will be Saturday April 1st at 9:00 a.m. The worship area and community room will be cleaned, dusted and polished. Everyone who can help, should come and help. This is next Saturday.

There will be a meeting of the Parish Council today after coffee hour. All are welcome to attend.

The Protection of the Mother of God Sisterhood News:

The Sisterhood will be raffling off a traditional Paschal basket on Sunday April 9th. The basket will contain many delicious holiday items. If you wish to contribute an item to the basket, please see the sign-up sheet in the community room. Raffle tickets are \$1.00, and each parishioner is asked to sell 10 tickets. Please see Lore Stefy for tickets.

Church School News:

This year we will be having a Paschal basket raffle just for kids! The basket will include items that will bring holiday happiness to any child. Tickets are not for sale, but can be earned each week your child attends church and church school. One ticket with the child's name on it will be placed in the raffle jar for each Sunday the child is in attendance during Great Lent. One winner will be drawn on Palm Sunday, April 9th.

Yesterday's prosphora making class has been postponed due to a lack of participants. This class will be rescheduled in the future. Thank you to everyone who expressed interest in the class.

Services of Great Lent 2017

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| March 26 | Sunday: 10 am Divine Liturgy, celebrating Annunciation and St. John Climacus |
| March 29 | Wednesday: 6:30 pm Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts with potluck to follow |
| April 1 | Saturday: 6:30 pm Vespers |
| April 2 | Sunday: 10 am Divine Liturgy, St. Mary of Egypt |
| April 5 | Wednesday: 6:30 pm Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts with potluck to follow, |
| April 8 | Saturday: 6:30 pm Vespers, Panikhida for the departed to follow |
| April 9 | Sunday: 10 am Divine Liturgy, Sunday of Entry into Jerusalem |
| April 12 | Wednesday: 6:30 pm Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts Sacrament of Holy Unction – Healing Sacrament, open to all Orthodox Christians |
| April 14 | Friday: 7 pm Holy Friday Matins |
| April 15 | Saturday: 11:30 pm Holy Pascha Vigil Nocturns, Matins, Divine Liturgy |



NY/NJ Diocese News

NEW JERSEY DEANERY: Vespers & Presentation on Supporting Life

Presentation on Supporting Life

During the Lenten Sunday Divine Liturgies we hear as part of the prayer following the Anaphora, that God *“knows the name and age of each, even from his (or her) mother’s womb.”* We as Orthodox Christians are inherently pro-life, but we often do not know what to do or what kind of response to make or provide. During the reception following the Southern New Jersey Deanery Vespers on Sunday, 19 March 2017, at the Orthodox Church of the Holy Cross in Medford NJ, representatives of the **Helpers of God’s Precious Infants** offered suggestions on how to support and build “a Culture of Life and Family.”

Mary Anne Barlow, Teri LaBrosse, and Claire Howson spoke about the work of the **Helpers**: *“Most of the women we meet are abortion minded due to fear and feeling as if they have no hope. We enter into the lives of these women and their families to provide invaluable support services and mentoring designed to evangelize, educate, and equip them to overcome personal crisis and move forward with life goals.”*

“We have made a difference by collectively working with local agencies and organizations and facilitating connections for our clients. We holistically care for people to promote their physical and mental wellbeing. This, then, enables them to care for one another. We believe that a healthy family is the cornerstone of a healthy society. Our comprehensive solution moves our clients from a life of social and community dependence to one of self-awareness, motivation and realized potential that allows them to ‘leave the system behind.’”

“We enable our clients to break down life problems into steps and to address each issue in turn. Our volunteers work with them to assess their overall needs and detail a step-by-step path to improve their lives. We then walk alongside them as they integrate and utilize all of the identified resources. We provide continuity to keep them moving forward and we advocate for them when necessary.”

“The Helpers also work to accept and distribute material donations and financial gifts. Donors and contributors want to know that their time and money has enabled parents to improve their family experience and enabled the family unit to become fully functional and capable of independent living.” (website: www.helpersnj.org) To volunteer your help go to the site: <http://optionline.org/>



Orthodox Church in America (OCA) News

Saint Proclus, Patriarch of Constantinople Sermon on the Annunciation

EDITOR’S NOTE: *Saint Proclus of Constantinople* was a disciple of Saint John Chrysostom, from whom he received a profound understanding of Holy Scripture and learned to elucidate his thoughts in a polished form. Serving as Patriarch of Constantinople from AD 434 through 447, he was esteemed for his ascetic life, his concern about the downtrodden, and his preaching. Many of his sermons and other writings have survived to the present day, including his sermon on the Annunciation, excerpts of which appear below. Best known are his discourses against the Nestorians, two tracts in praise of the Mother of God, and four tracts on the Nativity of Christ, setting forth the Orthodox teaching about the Incarnation of the Son of God.

Our present gathering in honor of the Most Holy Virgin inspires me, brethren, to offer her a word of praise, of benefit also for those who have come to this holy celebration. It is a praise of women, a glorification of their gender, which (glory) she brings to it, she who is both Mother and Virgin at the same time.

O desired and wondrous gathering! O nature, celebrate that whereby honor is rendered to woman! Rejoice, O human race, that in which the Virgin is glorified. “But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound” [Romans 5:20]. The Holy Mother of God and Virgin Mary has gathered us here. She is the pure treasure of virginity, the intended paradise of the Second Adam, the place where the union of natures (divine and human) was accomplished, and the Counsel of salvific reconciliation was affirmed.

Who has ever seen, who has ever heard, that the Limitless God would dwell within a womb? He Whom the Heavens cannot circumscribe is not limited by the womb of a Virgin! He Who is born of woman is not just God and He is not just Man. He Who is born has made woman the gateway of salvation. Where evil poured forth its poison, bringing on disobedience, there the Word made a living temple for Himself, bringing obedience there. From the place where the archsinner Cain sprang forth, there Christ the Redeemer of the human race was born without seed. The Lover of Mankind did not disdain to be born of woman, since She gave Him life (in His human nature). He was not subject to impurity by being in the womb which He Himself arrayed free from all harm. If this Mother had not remained a Virgin, then the Child born of her might be a mere man, and the birth would not be miraculous in any way. Since she remained a Virgin after giving birth, then how is He Who is born not God? It is an inexplicable mystery, for He Who passed through locked doors without hindrance was born in an inexplicable manner. Thomas cried out, “My Lord, and my God!” [John 20:28], thus confessing the union of two natures in Him.

The Apostle Paul says that Christ is “to the Jews a stumblingblock, and to the Greeks foolishness” [1 Corinthians 1:23]; they did not perceive the power of the mystery, since it was incomprehensible to their minds, “for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of Glory” [1 Corinthians 2:8]. If the Word had not settled within the womb, then the flesh would not have ascended onto the Divine Throne with Him. If it were disdainful for God to enter the womb which He created, then the angels also would have disdained service to mankind.

He, Who in His (divine) nature was not subject to sufferings, through His love for us subjected Himself to many sufferings. We believe that Christ was not made God by some gradual ascent toward the divine nature, but being God, He was made Man through His mercy. We do not say, “a man was made God,” but we confess that God was incarnate and made Man. He Who, in His essence did not have a mother chose His servant as Mother, and He Who appeared on earth in the image of man does not have an earthly father. How is He both without a father and without a mother, according to the words of the Apostle [Hebrews 7:3]? If He is only a man, then He cannot be without a mother, but actually He had a Mother. If He is only God, then He cannot be without a Father, but He has the Father. Yet as God the Creator, He has no mother, and as Man, He has no father.

We can be persuaded of this by the very name of the Archangel who spoke to Mary: his name is Gabriel. What does this name mean? It means “man of God.” Since He Whom Gabriel announced is God and Man, then his very name points to this miracle beforehand, so that this act of divine dispensation is accepted with faith. It would be impossible for a mere man to save people, for every man has need of the Savior, “for all have sinned,” says Saint Paul, “and come short of the Glory of God” [Romans 3:23]. Since sin subjects the sinner to the power of the devil, and the devil subjects him to death, then our condition became extremely desolate: there was no way to be delivered from death. Physicians were sent—i.e. the prophets—but they could only point out the malady more clearly. What did they do? When they saw that the illness was beyond human skill, they summoned the Physician from Heaven. One of them said, “Lord, bow Thy heavens, and come down” [Psalm 143/144:5]; others cried out, “Heal me, O Lord, and I shall be healed” [Jeremiah 17:14]; “Turn us, O God, and cause Thy face to shine; and we

shall be delivered” [Psalm 79/80:3].... Still others said, “But will God truly dwell with man upon the earth?” [3/1 Kings 8:27]; “Let Thy tender mercies go before us, O Lord, for we are greatly impoverished” [Psalm 78/79:8]....

He, Who by nature is Lord, did not disdain human nature enslaved by the sinister power of the devil. The merciful God would not allow it to be under the power of the devil forever, the Ever-Existing One came and gave His Blood in ransom. To redeem the race of man from death He gave up His Body, which He had accepted from the Virgin. He delivered the world from the curse of the law, annihilating death by His death. “Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law,” says Saint Paul [Galatians 3:13].

Know then that our Redeemer is not simply a mere man, since the whole human race was enslaved to sin. But neither is He just God, Who does not partake of human nature. He had a body, for if He had not clothed Himself in me, then neither would He have saved me. But, having settled in the womb of the Virgin, He clothed Himself in my fate, and within this womb He effected a miraculous change: He bestowed the Spirit and received a body.

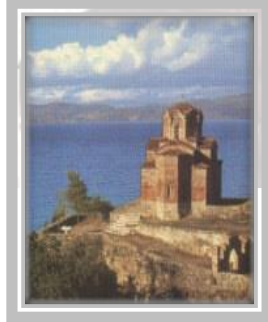
And so, Who is made manifest to us? The Prophet David shows you by these words: “Blessed is He that comes in the Name of the Lord” [Psalm 117/118:26]. But tell us even more clearly, O prophet, Who is He? The Lord is the God of Hosts, says the prophet: “God is the Lord, and has revealed Himself unto us” [Psalm 117/118:27]. “The Word was made flesh” [John 1:14]: there the two natures were united, and the union remained without mingling.

He came to save, but had also to suffer. What has the one in common with the other? A mere man cannot save; and God cannot suffer in His nature. By what means was the one and the other done? He, Emmanuel, being God, was made also Man. He saved by that which He was (God), and He suffered as that which He became (Man)....

He alone is both in the bosom of the Father and in the womb of the Virgin; He alone is in the arms of His Mother and rides on the wings of the winds [Psalm 103/104:3]. He, before Whom the angels bow down in worship, also reclined at table with publicans. The Seraphim dared not gaze upon Him, yet Pilate pronounced sentence upon Him. He Who the servant smote is also the One before Whom all creation trembles. He was nailed to the Cross, and ascended to the Throne of Glory. He was placed in the tomb, and He stretched out the heavens like a curtain [Psalm 103/104:2]. He was numbered among the dead, and He emptied Hell. Here on earth, they cursed Him as a transgressor; there in Heaven, they glorified Him as the All-Holy.

What an incomprehensible mystery! I see the miracles, and I confess that He is God. I see the sufferings, and I cannot deny that He is Man. Emmanuel opened the doors of nature as man, and as God He preserved the seal of virginity intact. He emerged from the womb at birth the same way He entered through the Annunciation. Wondrously was He both conceived and born: He entered without passion, and He emerged without impairment. As the Prophet Ezekiel says concerning this, “He brought me back by the way of the outer gate of the sanctuary that looks eastward: and it was shut. And the Lord said to me: This gate shall be shut, it shall not be opened, and no one shall pass through it; for the Lord God of Israel shall enter by it, and it shall be shut” [Ezekiel 44:1-2]. Here the Holy Virgin and Mother of God is clearly indicated. Let all contention cease, and let the Holy Scripture enlighten our reason, so that we too may receive the Heavenly Kingdom unto all eternity. Amen.

Prayers by the Laker, St. Velimirovich, C:



Accept the sacrifice of my words, my Father – accept the babbling of a penitent child, my Father!

Correct my words with Your truth, and accept them on the footstool of Your feet.

Cense my sacrifice with the fragrant incense of a saint's prayer and do not reject it, O Triradiate Master of worlds.

The ranks of angels offer You a more eloquent sacrifice, but their words stream to them from You, and return to You, untainted by the repulsiveness of darkness and not throttled in the throat by sin.

I am poor, and I have nothing else to offer on Your sacrificial altar except these words.

Even if I were to offer up creatures to You, I would be offering up words. For what are creatures except words. You have filled the entire universe with tongues, which are flames when they lift up praise to You and water -- when they whisper Your praises to themselves.

Even if I were to offer up a lamb to You, I would be offering You a word.

Even if I were to offer up a bird to You, I would be offering You a word.

Why should I offer up someone else's word to my Lord, why someone else's and not my own?

Who has made me master over someone else's life and someone else's song, over someone else's flame and someone else's sacrifice; who?

My words are my life and my song, my flame and my sacrifice. I have taken from what is Yours and am offering it up to You -- accept it and do not reject it, O Mother plenteous in lovingkindness.

I have picked a handful of wheat out of a field of tares, accept even a single kernel of wheat out of my handful and You will make me happy.

From a single kernel You can bake bread, enough for nations.

Accept my mite, O Son Who Resurrects, accept and do not reject the mite of a pauper.

Accept my sacrifice not for my sake but for the sake of someone who is even more impoverished than I; is there such a person?

Someone who does not even have what I do, for his sake accept my sacrifice; does such a person exist?

The world squeezed me like an accordion, scarcely did I take a breath and I moaned. Let Your angels give melody to my moaning and let them offer it up before You, my love.

I remind myself of all the blessings You have bestowed on me during my lifetime, my unfailing Companion, and I am offering up to You a gift in return from myself.

I am not offering up to You my entire self, for I am not entirely worthy to burn on Your most pure sacrificial altar. I cannot offer as a sacrifice to the Immortal One what is intended for death and corruption.

I offer up to You only that which has grown within me under Your light, that which was saved in me by Your Word.

Accept the sacrifice of my words, O Triune Bouquet of Flowers; accept the babbling of a new-born child.

When the choirs of angels begin to sing around Your throne, when the archangels' trumpets begin to blare, when Your martyrs begin to weep for joy, and Your saints begin to sob their prayers for the salvation of the Church on earth, do not despise the sacrifice of my words, O Lord my God.

Do not mishear, but hear.

I pray to You and bow down to You, now and throughout all time, and throughout all eternity. Amen.

Sayings of the Ascetics of the Orthodox Church, C:

III. Us and Our Neighbors How to Relate to the Sins of Others

If you see a man who has sinned and you do not pity him, the grace of God will leave you. Whoever curses bad people, and does not pray for them, will never come to know the grace of God.

St. Silouan the Athonite, Writings, VII.4, VIII.6

The Morning Offering – Daily Inspiration by Abbott Tryphon



The Struggle

Until this earthly life finishes the struggle between sin and righteousness continues

“Do not be surprised that you fall every day; do not give up, but stand your ground courageously. And assuredly, the angel who guards you will honour your patience (Saint John of the Ladder).”

Out of the lower parts of our soul arise gluttony and lust as well as their counter-virtues: abstinence, continence and chastity. Out of the higher parts of our soul come the more demonic passions of pride, arrogance and delusion, and from the same part of the soul arise the heavenly virtues of faith, hope and love.

So often we get bogged down with an obsession about our carnal sins, which so easily trip us up. But we neglect what is probably a much worse sin: hurting one another with our angry arrogant words, our ingratitude, our delusional pride and our accusing attitude towards others. All of these demonic sins come from the higher part of our soul or heart—the part, incidentally, we have in common with the bodiless demons.

From all the carnal sins of gluttony, drunkenness and sexual impurity, we can by the grace of God get up again. But if we fall into despair about our sins, then there is no way to get back up again. This is the sin against the Holy Spirit, that we reject the mercy of God.

Even if we fall a thousand times we must rise up again and again, doing so until our last breath, for it is written: ‘If a righteous man falls seven times,’ that is, repeatedly throughout his life, ‘seven times shall he rise again’ [Proverbs 24:16].”

Though we fall into sin constantly, we must remember that we do so because the demons set up traps for us. The Elder Thaddeus of Vitovnica tells us that “It is important to get up immediately after a fall and keep on walking toward God”. Even if we fall a hundred times a day, it does not matter; we must get up and go on walking toward God without looking back.

“Until a man’s earthly life finishes its course, up to the very departure of the soul from the body, the struggle between sin and righteousness continues within him. However high a spiritual and moral state one might achieve, a gradual or even headlong and deep fall into the abyss of sin is always possible. Therefore, communion of the holy Body and Blood of Christ, which strengthens our contact with Him and refreshes us with the living streams of the grace of the Holy Spirit flowing through the Body of the Church, is necessary for everyone (Saint John the Wonderworker of Shanghai and San Francisco).“



Daily Reflection **Unreflecting Faith**



“In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin’s name was Mary. And he came to her and said, ‘Hail, O full of grace (κεχαριτωμένη), the Lord is with you! Blessed are you among women!’ But she was greatly troubled at the saying, and considered in her mind what sort of greeting this might be.” (Lk 1: 26-29)

Mary was not an un-reflecting kind of person. She was “greatly troubled” by, and “considered in her mind,” what in the world an angel, – yes, an angel, no less, – was talking about. She needed to know more, because the “greeting” made no sense in the context of Mary’s life-experience thus far.

I’m thinking about this today, because I just read something that disturbed me in the works of the famous psychologist, Karl Jung, about us church-people often having “un-reflecting faith.” This is what Jung observes: “The Churches stand for traditional and collective convictions which in the case of many of their adherents are no longer based on their own inner experience but on un-reflecting faith, which is notoriously apt to disappear as soon as one begins thinking about it.” I was disturbed by Jung’s observation, because I think he is right. I mean, it seems to me he is right as far as we, the people of my Church today, are concerned.

I’m consoled, however, by the example of the Blessed Among Women, in those early times of our “traditional and collective convictions,” when the Holy Virgin was being introduced to them. She does “consider in her mind,” and have questions, but also has an open heart to the replies of God’s messenger, Gabriel.

So let me not hesitate today, to “consider in my mind” what it is God is telling me through His many messengers, including the people and situations He sends my way. This does not have to be a complicated process, in connection with His grace, when I connect with Him in heartfelt prayer. It is simple, even though it is not easy. Let me have an open heart to God’s replies, in my God-given conscience.

Holy Orthodox Quotes

“We carry within us the sins of remembrance of wrongs, and bitterness, and hate, and greed, and so many other things which kill the life of the spirit in us and do not allow us to live now, in the present time – the eternal life, which is simply life in the full meaning of the word, life in its fullness.”

- Met. Anthony of Sourozh

Wisdom of Sirach 28:2-7

Forgive a wrong done you by your neighbor; Then your sins will be pardoned when you pray.† Can a man preserve wrath against his neighbor And still seek healing from the Lord?† Can he show no mercy toward a man like himself And still beg God for mercy for himself?† If he being flesh keeps his anger continually, Who will atone for his sins? Remember the end of your life And cease from enmity; Remember destruction and death And stand fast in the commandments.† Remember the commandments And do not vent your wrath against your neighbor; Remember the covenant of the Most High And overlook faults.

Matthew 6:14-15

“For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you.† But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

John 10:10

The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.†

The Philokalia: Daily Readings

It is through unceasing watchfulness that we can perceive what is entering into us and can to some extent close the door against it, calling upon our Lord Jesus Christ to repel our malevolent adversaries. Attentiveness obstructs the demons by rebutting them, and Jesus, when invoked, disperses them together with all their fantasies.

.- St Philotheos of Sinai, 40 Texts on Watchfulness

Ancient Christian Wisdom

If prayer coexists with a person’s life, then no matter what he does, even the simplest, most day-to-day tasks are dedicated to God.

- Metropolitan Hilarion

Wisdom of the Church Fathers

"Wounded by wicked pleasures, heal me with the bountiful cure of Your merciful divine will, O Word, and I will glorify You with thanksgiving forever"

(Triodion, First Week of Lent, Tuesday)

Through the Grace of God – Orthodox Christianity

Who am I?

While praying one day a woman asked, “Who are you, God?” He answered, “I Am.”

“But who is, ‘I Am?’” She asked.

He replied, “I am Love, I am Peace, I am Grace, I am Shelter, I am Power, I am the Creator, I am the Comforter, I am the Beginning and the End. I am the Way, Truth, and the Life.”

With tears in her eyes, she looked toward heaven and said, “Now I understand. But who am I?”

God tenderly wiped the tears from her eyes and whispered,

“You are mine.”

Orthodox Quote of the Day

To become simple means a change, a change of life; it means such a change as can be accomplished by the right hand of the Most High (Psalm 76:11 – "This change hath been wrought by the right hand of the Most High"). Then you shall not perish, for simplicity is humility. And on humble people God spreads His grace as upon the Holy Table.

Archbishop Seraphim (Sobolev) of Bogucharsk