

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 Vlash

Parish Council President: Trudy Ellmore

Parish Council Vice President: Holly Dawson



Sunday, May 31, 2015

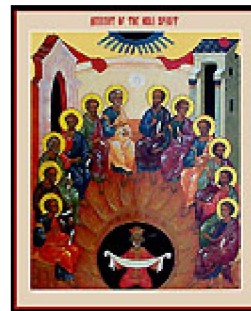
Gospel: John 7:37-52; 8:12

Tone 7

Epistle: Acts 2:1-11

8th Sunday of Pascha; Sunday of Holy Pentecost

*Glory to
Jesus Christ!*



*Sunday of Holy
Pentecost*

*Glory
Forever!*

*When the most High came down and confused the tongues,
He divided the nations; But when he distributed the tongues of fire
He called all to unity.
Therefore, with one voice, we glorify the All-holy Spirit!*

Today the Church Remembers

8th Sunday of Pascha —Holy Pentecost: Feast of the Holy Trinity.
Apostle Hermas of the Seventy (1st c.). Martyr Hermias at Comana (2nd c.). Martyr Philosophus at Alexandria (3rd c.).

Weekly Bulletin Sponsors

For Health of:

Gabrielle Stefy on her birthday, offered by her grandmother, Lore Stefy

Linda & Paul Jankowski on their 34th wedding anniversary.

In Eternal Memory of:

Marianna Stefy, offered by her mother in-law, Lore Stefy.

Liturgical Schedule:

Sunday, May 31th

9:30 am: Church School
9:40 am: Hours
10:00 am: Divine Liturgy

Saturday, June 6th

6:30 pm: Vespers

Sunday, June 7th

9:30 am: No Church School
9:40 am: Hours
10:00 am: Divine Liturgy

Saturday, June 13th

6:30 pm: Vespers

Sunday, June 14th

9:30 am: Church School
9:40 am: Hours
10:00 am: Divine Liturgy

Readings:

Epistle: Acts 2:1-11

When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. And suddenly a sound came from heaven like the rush of a mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared to them tongues as of fire, distributed and resting on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. Now there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men from every nation under heaven. And at this sound the multitude came together, and they were bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in his own language. And they were amazed and wondered, saying, "Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? And how is it that we hear, each of us in his own native language? Parthians and Medes and Elamites and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors

from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabians, we hear them telling in our own tongues the mighty works of God."

Gospel: John 7:37-52; 8:12

On the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus stood up and proclaimed, "If any one thirst, let him come to me and drink. He who believes in me, as the scripture has said, 'Out of his heart shall flow rivers of living water.'" Now this he said about the Spirit, which those who believed in him were to receive; for as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.

When they heard these words, some of the people said, "This is really the prophet." Others said, "This is the Christ." But some said, "Is the Christ to come from Galilee? Has not the scripture said that the Christ is descended from David, and comes from Bethlehem, the village where David was?" So there was a division among the people over him. Some of them wanted to arrest him, but no one laid hands on him.

The officers then went back to the chief priest and Pharisees, who said to them, "Why did you not bring him?" The officers answered, "No man ever spoke like this man!" The Pharisees answered them, "Are you led astray, you also? Have any of the authorities or of the Pharisees believed in him? But this crowd, who do not know the law, are accursed." Nikodemos, who had gone to him before, and who was one of them, said to them, "Does our law judge a man without first giving him a hearing and learning what he does?" They replied, "Are you from Galilee too? Search and you will see that no prophet is to rise from Galilee." Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, "I am the light of the world; he who follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."



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

The Parish Council will be today, Sunday, May 31st downstairs in the community room at 12:15 PM.

Sub-Deacon Vlash has accepted the call to once again serve with an **OCMC Youth Outreach Mission Team** going to Albania June 15 to July 1, 2015 and to go on a pilgrimage to **Mt. Athos** (the Holy Mountain) in Greece July 1 to July 9, 2015. Please remember him in your prayers in his many preparations. If your heart is moved to support him financially, please speak to him for information on how to do so. Every dollar donated over the cost of the trip will be given to the orphanage (Children’s Home of Hope on the grounds of the Shen Vlash Monastery and Resurrection of Christ Theological Academy in Durres, Albania).

Volunteer needed to open and close doors for Living Clean Narcotics Anonymous meetings held on Fridays, for the following dates: June 19th, 26th, and July 3rd, while Sub-Deacon Vlash is away. The meetings start at 8:00 PM, however the doors need to be opened at 7:30 PM. The meetings end at 9:15 PM. If anyone is interested please contact Sub-Deacon Vlash. Thank you.

Coming Events for Your Calendar

June 13, 2015

NJ Deanery Church School Teachers Conference

Christ the Savior Church, Paramus, NJ

Teachers, please make every effort to attend!!

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 on Sunday July 5th after Divine Liturgy and coffee hour downstairs in the community room.



NY/NJ Diocese News

SAINT ANDREW’S CAMP: Campers & Staff Make Ready for the 2015 Season!

The summer programs at **Saint Andrew’s Camp in Jewell NY** are “gearing-up” for another summer of faith, fun, and fellowship. Currently the camp is **seeking additional male counselors**, and there’s always room for dedicated volunteers to support the activities of the five-week resident camping schedule in the beautifully rustic setting along the shore of Lake Oneida. **Programs begin on 28 June and**

conclude on 1 August.



Orthodox Church in America (OCA) News

St. Tikhon’s site of PaTram Institute’s second choral class July 13-18, 2015

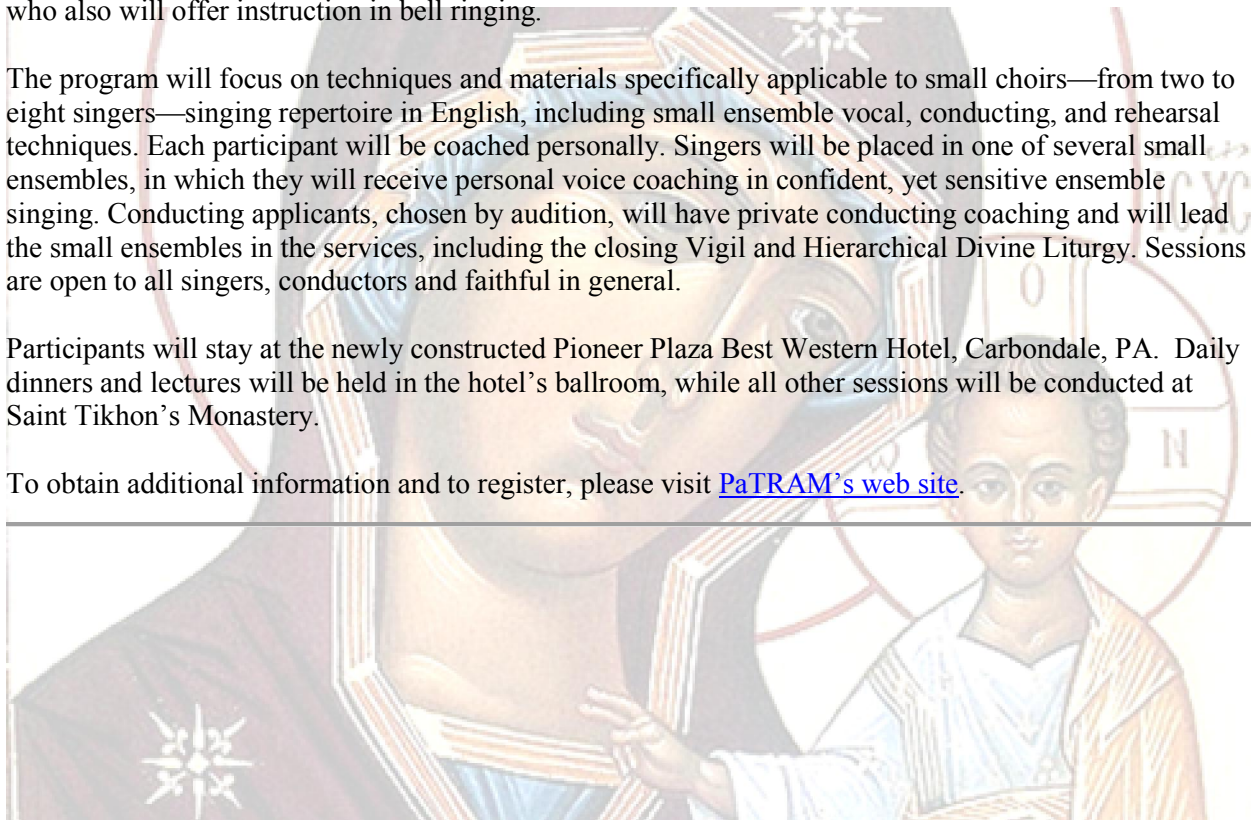
A mixed choir and conductor’s class titled “Cultivating Pearls” will be offered by the [Patriarch Tikhon Russian American Institute](#) [PaTRAM] in conjunction with [Blagovest Bells](#) at Saint Tikhon’s [Monastery](#) and [Seminary](#) here July 13-18, 2015.

Instructors include Vladimir Gorbik, PaTram’s Artistic Director and Choirmaster at Moscow’s Holy Trinity-St. Sergius Lavra Podvorye, who will teach conducting virtually from Moscow; Vladimir Morosan, Founder of Musica Russica, who will offer instructions in technique and lecture on congregational singing; Benedict Sheehan, Music Instructor at Saint Tikhon’s Monastery and Seminary, who will offer instruction in conducting and voice; Mark Galperin, General Manager of Blagovest Bells, who will lecture on bell ringing; and Constantine Stade, bell installation and ringing specialist, who also will offer instruction in bell ringing.

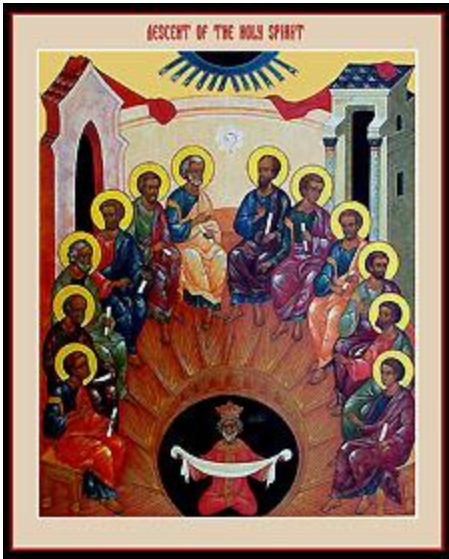
The program will focus on techniques and materials specifically applicable to small choirs—from two to eight singers—singing repertoire in English, including small ensemble vocal, conducting, and rehearsal techniques. Each participant will be coached personally. Singers will be placed in one of several small ensembles, in which they will receive personal voice coaching in confident, yet sensitive ensemble singing. Conducting applicants, chosen by audition, will have private conducting coaching and will lead the small ensembles in the services, including the closing Vigil and Hierarchical Divine Liturgy. Sessions are open to all singers, conductors and faithful in general.

Participants will stay at the newly constructed Pioneer Plaza Best Western Hotel, Carbondale, PA. Daily dinners and lectures will be held in the hotel’s ballroom, while all other sessions will be conducted at Saint Tikhon’s Monastery.

To obtain additional information and to register, please visit [PaTRAM’s web site](#).



Sunday of the Holy Pentecost



In the Church's annual liturgical cycle, Pentecost is "the last and great day." It is the celebration by the Church of the coming of the Holy Spirit as the end—the achievement and fulfillment—of the entire history of salvation. For the same reason, however, it is also the celebration of the beginning: it is the "birthday" of the Church as the presence among us of the Holy Spirit, of the new life in Christ, of grace, knowledge, adoption to God and holiness.

This double meaning and double joy is revealed to us, first of all, in the very name of the feast. Pentecost in Greek means fifty, and in the sacred biblical symbolism of numbers, the number fifty symbolizes both the fulness of time and that which is beyond time: the Kingdom of God itself. It symbolizes the fulness of time by its first component: 49, which is the fulness of seven (7 x 7): the number of time. And, it symbolizes that which is beyond time by its second component: 49 + 1, this one being the new day, the "day without evening" of God's eternal Kingdom. With the descent of the Holy Spirit upon Christ's disciples, the time of salvation, the Divine work of redemption has been completed, the fulness revealed, all gifts bestowed: it belongs to us now to "appropriate" these gifts, to be that which we have become in Christ: participants and citizens of His Kingdom.

The Vigil of Pentecost

The all-night Vigil service begins with a solemn invitation:

"Let us celebrate Pentecost, the coming of the Holy Spirit,
The appointed day of promise, and the fulfillment of hope,
The mystery which is as great as it is precious."

In the coming of the Spirit, the very essence of the Church is revealed:

"The Holy Spirit provides all,
Overflows with prophecy, fulfills the priesthood,
Has taught wisdom to illiterates, has revealed fishermen as theologians,
He brings together the whole council of the Church."

In the three readings of the Old Testament (Numbers 11:16-17, 24-29; Joel 2:23-32; Ezekiel 36:24-28) we hear the prophecies concerning the Holy Spirit. We are taught that the entire history of mankind was directed towards the day on which God "would pour out His Spirit upon all flesh." This day has come! All hope, all promises, all expectations have been fulfilled. At the end of the Aposticha hymns, for the first time since Easter, we sing the hymn: "O Heavenly King, the Comforter, the Spirit of Truth..." the one with which we inaugurate all our services, all prayers, which is, as it were, the life-breath of the Church, and whose coming to us, whose "descent" upon us in this festal Vigil, is indeed the very experience of the Holy Spirit "coming and abiding in us."

Having reached its climax, the Vigil continues as an explosion of joy and light for "verily the light of the Comforter has come and illumined the world." In the Gospel reading (John 20:19-23) the feast is interpreted to us as the feast of the Church, of her divine nature, power and authority. The Lord sends His disciples into the world, as He Himself was sent by His Father. Later, in the antiphons of the Liturgy, we proclaim the universality of the apostles' preaching, the cosmical significance of the feast,

the sanctification of the whole world, the true manifestation of God’s Kingdom.

The Vespers of Pentecost

The liturgical peculiarity of Pentecost is a very special Vespers of the day itself. Usually this service follows immediately the Divine Liturgy, is “added” to it as its own fulfillment. The service begins as a solemn “summing up” of the entire celebration, as its liturgical synthesis. We hold flowers in our hands symbolizing the joy of the eternal spring, inaugurated by the coming of the Holy Spirit. After the festal Entrance, this joy reaches its climax in the singing of the Great Prokeimenon:

“Who is so great a God as our God?”

Then, having reached this climax, we are invited to kneel. This is our first kneeling since Easter. It signifies that after these fifty days of Paschal joy and fulness, of experiencing the Kingdom of God, the Church now is about to begin her pilgrimage through time and history. It is evening again, and the night approaches, during which temptations and failures await us, when, more than anything else, we need Divine help, that presence and power of the Holy Spirit, who has already revealed to us the joyful End, who now will help us in our effort towards fulfillment and salvation.

All this is revealed in the three prayers which the celebrant reads now as we all kneel and listen to him. In the first prayer, we bring to God our repentance, our increased appeal for forgiveness of sins, the first condition for entering into the Kingdom of God.

In the second prayer, we ask the Holy Spirit to help us, to teach us to pray and to follow the true path in the dark and difficult night of our earthly existence. Finally, in the third prayer, we remember all those who have achieved their earthly journey, but who are united with us in the eternal God of Love.

The joy of Easter has been completed and we again have to wait for the dawn of the Eternal Day. Yet, knowing our weakness, humbling

ourselves by kneeling, we also know the joy and the power of the Holy Spirit who has come. We know that God is with us, that in Him is our victory.

Thus is completed the feast of Pentecost and we enter “the ordinary time” of the year. Yet, every Sunday now will be called “after Pentecost”—and this means that it is from the power and light of these fifty days that we shall receive our own power, the Divine help in our daily struggle. At Pentecost we decorate our churches with flowers and green branches—for the Church “never grows old, but is always young.” It is an evergreen, ever-living Tree of grace and life, of joy and comfort. For the Holy Spirit—“the Treasury of Blessings and Giver of Life—comes and abides in us, and cleanses us from all impurity,” and fills our life with meaning, love, faith and hope.

Father Alexander Schmemmann (1974)

Patristic Wisdom for Daily Living with the Church Fathers:

Don’t underestimate God

In ancient times as well as our own, people brought forward supposedly scientific arguments against the resurrection. St. Gregory of Nyssa answers them: don’t judge God’s capabilities by your own.

Because human reason is so weak, there are some who—judging divine power by the limits of our own—insist that what is beyond our capacity is impossible even for God. They point to the fact that the dead of past ages have disappeared, and to the ashes of those who have been cremated. They bring up the idea of carnivorous animals, and the fish that consumes the body of the shipwrecked sailor—the fish then becoming food for people, and passing by digestion into the mass of the one who eats it. They bring up many similarly trivial things to overthrow the doctrine of the resurrection—as though God could not restore man the way he made him in the first place.

But we make quick work of their convoluted logical foolishness by acknowledging that the body does indeed dissolve into the parts it was made of. Not only does earth return to earth, as God’s word says, but air and water also revert to the like element. Each of our parts returns to the elements it was made from.

But although the human body may be scattered among vultures, or the most savage beasts, by becoming their food; and although it may pass through the teeth of fish; and although it may be changed by fire into smoke and dust—wherever you may suppose, for the sake of argument, the man has been removed, he certainly remains in the world. And the world, as the voice of inspiration tells us, is held by the hand of God.

If you, then, known what is in your hand, do you suppose that God’s knowledge is weaker than your own power? Do you suppose that it would fail to discover the smallest things that are in the palm of God’s hand?

—St. Gregory of Nyssa, *On the Making of Man*, 26

In God’s Presence, consider....

Do I really trust in God’s perfect knowledge of every circumstance?

Closing Prayer:

Lord, help me prepare for my death with an appropriate fear of judgment, but an even greater trust in your mercy. Bring me safe through my death to the eternal joy of heaven.

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

Would that I could make musicians out of stone, and dancers out of the sand of the lake, and minstrels out of the leaves of all the trees in the mountains, so that they might help me glorify the Lord—and so that the voice of the earth might be heard amidst the choirs of angels!

The sons of men gorge themselves at the table of the absent Master, and do not sing for anyone except themselves and their mouthfuls, which must eventually return to the earth.

Exceedingly sad is the blindness of the sons of men, who do not see the power and glory of the Lord. A bird lives in the forest, and does not see the forest. A fish swims in the water, and does not see the water. A mole lives in the earth, and does not see the earth. In truth, the similarity of man to birds, fish, and moles is exceedingly sad.

People, like animals, do not pay attention to what exists in excessive abundance, but only open their eyes before what is rare or exceptional.

There is too much of You, O Lord, my breath, therefore people do not see You. You are too obvious, O Lord, my sighing, therefore the attention of people is diverted from You and directed toward polar bears, toward rarities in the distance.

You serve Your servants too much, my sweet faithfulness, therefore You are subjected to scorn. You rise to kindle the sun over the lake too early, therefore sleepyheads cannot bear You. You are too zealous in lighting the vigil lamps in the firmament at night, my unsurpassed zeal, and the lazy heart of people talks more about an indolent servant than about zeal.

O my love, would that I could motivate all the inhabitants of the earth, water, and air to hum a hymn to You! Would that I could remove leprosy from the face of the earth and turn this wanton world back into the sort of virgin that You created!

Truly, my God, You are just as great with or without the world.

You are equally great whether the world glorifies You or whether the world blasphemes You. But when the world blasphemes You, You seem even greater in the eyes of Your saints.

Sayings of the Ascetics of the Orthodox Church

God and Us – How does God relate to us?

The Lord loves all people, but He loves those who seek Him even more. To his chosen ones

the Lord gives such great grace that for love they forsake the whole earth, the whole world, and their souls burn with desire that all people might be saved and see the glory of the Lord.

St. Silouan the Athonite, Writings, IX.8

The Prologue of Ohrid

St. Nikolai Velimirovic

Reflection

This life is a spiritual struggle. To conquer or to be defeated! If we conquer, we will enjoy the fruits of victory throughout all eternity; if we are defeated, we will endure the horrors of destruction throughout all eternity. This life is a duel between man and all that is contrary to the Divine. God is an Almighty ally to all who sincerely call upon Him for help. "This life is not a joke or a play thing," says Father John of Cronstadt, "but men turn it into a joke and plaything. But the capricious play around with time given to us for preparing for eternity, play around with empty words. They gather together as guests, they sit and chatter and after that they sit and play in this way or the other way; they gather in theatres and there they entertain themselves. All life for them is an amusement. But, woe unto them who are only entertaining themselves."

Contemplation

To contemplate the Grace of God the Holy Spirit in the Mystery [Sacrament] of Holy Unction [Anointing with Oil]:

1. How that Grace works through sanctified oil;
2. How according to prayer and faith, It heals every illness and every infirmity.

Homily:

About the Mystery [Sacrament] of Holy Unction [Anointing with Holy Oil]

"...And anointed with oil many that were sick, and healed them" (St. Mark 6:13).

The holy apostles did this and it is commanded that we do the same. The Apostle James writes to us: "Is there any sick among you? Let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the Name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he has committed sins, they shall be forgiven him" (St. James 5: 14-15). You need not call anyone except the priests, the elders of the church; you need not anoint him in any other name except the Name of the Lord, so that it will not appear as witchcraft. No one will be able to raise him except the Lord Himself nor can any other forgive his sins except the One Lord. Why oil and not something else? Because it is commanded and so that we may show obedience and faith. Why is it commanded that we baptize with water and anoint [Chrismate] with oil [myrrh] and communicate with bread and wine? That is God's choice and God's prudence and ours is to believe and to obey. Various elements are used in the different Mysteries [Sacraments], but the Grace of God is one as our Lord is one and everything is from the Lord. Why does our Lord need some materials in order to pour out His Grace upon us? The Lord does not need the material but we do as long as we are material, we need material. Condescending to our weakness, the Lord uses matter. To the incorporeal angels, He gives Grace in an incorporeal manner.

Oil alone is helpless of itself as every other material is helpless of itself, but the Grace of God is All-powerful. Through oil, the Lord gives the Grace of His Holy Spirit and that Grace heals the sick, raises the infirm and restores sanity to the insane.

O my brethren, how inexpressible is God's goodness! What did not God do for us? And what more could we possibly desire? He knew all of our needs beforehand and, for all of them, He foresaw the cures in advance. He only seeks from us that we believe in Him and fulfill His prescriptions. Is it not insolent and shameful that we more often conscientiously follow the instructions of physicians, mortal men such as we are, and neglect the prescriptions of the Immortal God?

O All-good Lord, melt our stony hearts by the power of Your Grace so that before the hour of our death, we may show indebted thanksgiving toward You: toward You O our All-good and our All-wise God!

To You be glory and thanks always. Amen.

The Church’s Dirty Little Secret

By Joe McKeever

“Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there” (Ephesians 4:14).

“Church is the only place on earth where people can throw hissy fits and get away with it.” —A friend serving his first church after seminary

I told my minister friend I was sorry he had to learn this little dirty secret about church life.

I asked for his story. He had two.

A church member attending his class said she could not find her workbook. The pastor told her he had borrowed it for another class, and she was welcome to use his. She said, “Okay. I’ll go home then.”

And she stalked out.

The minister said, “Would she have done that at work? At the doctor’s office? I think not.”

But she had no problem with putting her immaturity on full display at church.

On another day, a man stormed out of a church leadership meeting because his idea for a fundraiser had been rejected.

My friend said, “Would he have done that in a college class? At work? At home? At the store, even?”

He would not have. And this guy was a church leader!

The church—which is the institution which we Christians should respect most—ends up being the least respected by many. And the pastor the least respected professional.

My friend said, “Situations like these used to keep me up at night. By God’s grace, they don’t anymore.”

I’m sad he had to learn this reality about church life; I’m glad he’s sleeping at night.

A couple of random comments come to mind.

—The only way Noah could stand the stink inside the ark was the storm outside.

—That the church still exists, with all its human flaws, is proof aplenty of the grace and mercy of God.

Immature believers abound and that’s all right. Babies must go through all the stages of development before they achieve maturity. But we should never put an infant in a place of leadership. Leaders must be adults in the faith if they are to be role models and examples to those coming after.

The leader who storms out of a meeting because he/she did not get their way has just done the church a favor. He/she has identified themselves as unqualified to lead, as surely as if they had hung a sign around their neck.

We are better off without such people representing God’s church and making critical decisions. (On the other hand, if that one comes back and apologizes before the entire group, that is a sign of a growing maturity and they should be given every encouragement.)

Here are seven “wrong ideas” the spiritually immature—those given to “hissy fits,” as my friend put it—have about the Lord’s work ...

1) They see the church as a human institution belonging to them.

“We can do anything we want to. It’s our church. My daddy helped start this church.” Or paid for that pew. Or build that shed.

They do not see the church as holy and belonging to Christ (Matthew 16:18).

They are in for a rude awakening when they appear before Jesus someday.

2) They see the pastors as their employees, there to do their bidding and accountable to them.

“We hired him; we can fire him.” “If we are unhappy with him, then he has lost his effectiveness and needs to be replaced.”

They do not believe that God sends pastors to churches and installs them as the overseers of His flock (Acts 20:28 and I Peter 5:2).

They are in for a rude awakening when they stand before Jesus someday.

3) They see God’s work as something the professionals do and their roles as volunteers when it’s convenient and easy.

“We hired him to increase the attendance.” “It’s his job to visit the sick and reach the lost; that’s why we pay him.”

They do not see that the command to be light and salt, to take the gospel to the ends of the earth, was given to the entire church, not just the apostles.

They are in for a rude awakening when they stand before Jesus someday.

4) They see their contributions (money, service, teaching, etc.) as voluntary and not required.

“If I give my money, I expect it to be done the way I want it to.” “I’m not giving my money there anymore; I don’t like what the pastor is doing.”

They do not see themselves as under Heaven’s mandate and fully accountable to the living God.

They are in for a rude awakening when they stand before Jesus one day.

5) They see their church’s reputation in the community as irrelevant and unity as beside the point.

“We’re Baptists. Where you find two, you’ll have three opinions.” “I’ve been here the longest; I deserve to be heard.” “If the community sees our church as divisive, that’s their problem and they don’t have to come.”

They do not get John 17:21 where our Lord prayed for unity among His people “that the world may believe that Thou hast sent me.” When the church is divided, the community wants none of what it has to offer, and the Kingdom of God suffers.

Such people are in for a rude awakening when they stand before Jesus one day.

6) They see their childish behavior as no one’s business but their own.

“I’m not responsible for what others think of me.” “If people make decisions about Jesus based on how I act, well that’s just their problem.” “God knows my heart.”

They do not get Matthew 5:16 where Jesus commanded us to let our light so shine before men that they might see our good works

and glorify our Father who is in Heaven. A great deal depends on my faithfulness.

They are in for a rude awakening when they stand before Jesus one day.

7) They see themselves as the center of their own universe and think everything revolves around them.

“God wants me happy. I heard a television preacher say that and I believe it.” “If I’m not getting anything out of the sermon, it’s the preacher’s fault.”

They do not see that Jesus Christ is the center of everything, and that worship is a matter of “giving to Him the glory due His name.” By worshipping Him rightly, they will get a lot from a service; however, if they go into the service to “get something,” they will receive nothing from it. It’s a matter of focus.

Count this as a call for maturity in leadership and discipleship of the membership.

Pastors should preach constantly that the commands of the New Testament were given to the full church and not just the disciples, and that we shall all stand before the Lord and give account of our faithfulness someday.

They asked a well-known preacher of a past generation, “What is the most important thing we need to get across to the people of God today?” He answered immediately: “Our accountability to God.”

“Why do you look down on your brother? For we shall all stand before God’s judgement seat. It is written ‘As surely as I live,’ says the Lord, ‘every knee will bow before me; every tongue will confess to God.’ So then, each of us will give an account of himself to God” (Romans 14:10-12).

From time to time, if we stay in the Lord’s church long enough, each one of us will receive a disappointment from not getting something we had our heart set on. We will be denied some program or event or facility that was dear to us. Nothing tells the story about our maturity like the way we handle our disappointment.

Let us grow up into maturity. Let us be strong in the Lord and thus be able to help others coming behind us.