

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, May 7, 2017

Gospel: John 5:1-15

St. Alexis: John 10:1-9

Tone 3

Epistle: Acts 9:32-43

St. Alexis: Galatians 1:11-19

4th Sunday of Pascha: Sunday of the Paralytic. Repose of St. Alexis Toth, Confessor and Defender of Orthodoxy in America

Commemoration of the Appearance of the Sign of the Precious Cross over Jerusalem in 351 AD. Martyr Acacius the Centurion at Byzantium (303). Repose of Ven. Nilus, Abbot of Sora (1508). St. John of Zaden in Georgia, and 12 disciples: Ss. Shio, David, Anthony, Thaddæus, Stephen, Isidore, Michael, Pyrrhus, Zeno, Jesse, Joseph, and Abibus (6th c.). Ven. Nilus the Myrrhgusher of Lavra (Mt. Athos—1651). Monk Martyr Pachomius (Mt. Athos—1730). The “ZHIROVITSKAYA” Icon of the Most-holy Theotokos (1470).

Troparion – Tone 4

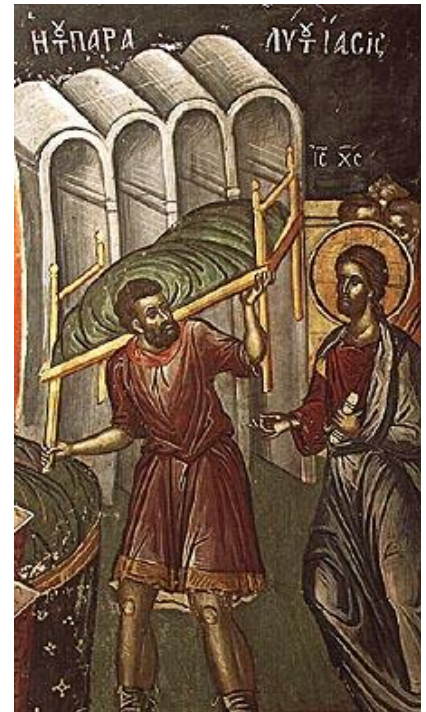
O righteous Father Alexis, / Our heavenly intercessor and teacher, / Divine adornment of the Church of Christ! / Entreat the Master of All / To strengthen the Orthodox Faith in America, / To grant peace to the world / And to our souls, great mercy!

Kontakion – Tone 3

By Your divine intercession, O Lord, / as You raised up the paralytic of old, / so raise up my soul, paralyzed by sins and thoughtless acts; / so that being saved I may sing to You: / “Glory to Your power, O compassionate Christ!”

Kontakion – Tone 5

Let us, the faithful, praise the Priest Alexis, / A bright beacon of Orthodoxy in America, / A model of patience and humility, / A worthy shepherd of the Flock of Christ. / He called back the sheep who had been led astray / And brought them by his preaching / To the Heavenly Kingdom!



Sunday of the Paralytic

Prayer Requests

For Health of:

Archbishop Michael, on the 7th Anniversary of his Consecration to the Episcopacy (May 8th), offered by the Orthodox Church of the Mother of God.

Lisa Matthews, on her birthday, offered by her mother Lore Stefy.

Peter Freed, on his birthday offered by his aunt Lore Stefy.

Mom & Dad Golden, on their anniversary, offered by the Golden kids.

John Dantinne, on his birthday, offered by his family with love.

Protopresbyter Leonid Kishkovsky, Presbyter Gregory White, Kevin Kohler, Rose Boykas, Linda Mucyn, Archpriest Ronald Hazuda, Cara Paccio Green, and Elizabeth Baran offered by Archbishop Michael and the Diocese of NY/NJ.

In Memory of:

Sara Lee Pindar, long-time choir director of St. Vladimir's Church in Trenton NJ, who fell asleep in the Lord on Thursday, April 27, offered by Archbishop Michael and the Diocese of NY/NJ.

Liturgical Schedule

Sunday, May 7th

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

Saturday, May 13th

6:30 pm: Vespers

Sunday, May 14th

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

Saturday, May 20th

6:30 pm: Vespers

Sunday, May 21st

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

Saturday, May 27th

6:30 pm: Vespers

Sunday, May 28th

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

Bulletin Sponsors

*Lore Stefy, The Golden
Kids & The Dantine
Family*

Readings:

The Prokeimenon in the 1st Tone:

Let Thy mercy, O Lord, be upon us as we have set our hope on Thee!
(*Psalm 32:22*)

vs. Rejoice in the Lord, O ye righteous! Praise befits the just!
(*Psalm 32:1*)

Another, Tone 7 (St. Alexis):

The righteous shall rejoice in the Lord, and shall hope in Him.
(*Psalm 63:11*)

Epistle: Acts 9:32-43

In those days, as Peter went here and there among them all, he came down also to the saints that lived at Lydda. There he found a man named Aeneas, who had been bedridden for eight years and was paralyzed. And Peter said to him, "Aeneas, Jesus Christ heals you; rise and make your bed." And immediately he rose. And all the residents of Lydda and Sharon saw him, and they turned to the Lord. Now there was at Joppa a disciple named Tabitha, which means Dorcas. She was full of good works and acts of charity. In those days she fell sick and died; and when they had washed her, they laid her in an upper room. Since Lydda was near Joppa, the disciples, hearing that Peter was there, sent two men to him entreating him, "Please come to us without delay." So Peter rose and went with them. And when he had come, they took him to the upper room. All the widows stood beside him weeping, and showing tunics and other garments which Dorcas made while she was with them. But Peter put them all outside and knelt down and prayed; then turning to the body he said, "Tabitha, rise." And she opened her eyes, and when she saw Peter she sat up. And he gave her his hand and lifted her up. Then calling the saints and widows he presented her alive. And it became known throughout all Joppa, and many believed in the Lord.

St. Alexis: Galatians 1:11-19

I make known to you, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came through the revelation of Jesus Christ. For you have heard of my former conduct in Judaism, how I persecuted the church of God beyond measure and tried to destroy it. And I advanced in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries in my own nation, being more exceedingly zealous for the traditions of my fathers. But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb and called me through His grace, to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately confer with flesh and blood, nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me; but I went to Arabia, and returned again to Damascus. Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and remained with him fifteen days. But I saw none of the other apostles except James, the Lord's brother.

Alleluia in the 5th Tone:

I will sing of Thy mercies, O Lord, forever; with my mouth will I proclaim Thy truth from generation to generation.
(Psalm 88:2)

vs. For Thou hast said: “Mercy will be established forever; Thy truth will be prepared in the heavens.”
(Psalm 88:3)

Another, Tone 6 (St. Alexis):

Blessed is the man who fears the Lord, who greatly delights in His commandments.
(Psalm 111:1)

Gospel: John 5:1-15

At that time, Jesus went up to Jerusalem. Now there is in Jerusalem by the Sheep Gate a pool, in Hebrew called Bethesda which has five porticoes. In these lay a multitude of invalids, blind, lame, paralyzed, waiting for the moving of the water; for an angel of the Lord went down at certain seasons into the pool, and troubled the water; whoever stepped in first after the troubling of the water was healed of whatever disease he had. One man was there, who had been ill for thirty-eight years. When Jesus saw him and knew that he had been lying there a long time, he said to him, "Do you want to be healed?" The sick man answered him, "Sir, I have no man to put me into the pool when the water is troubled, and while I am going another steps down before me." Jesus said to him, "Rise, take up your pallet, and walk." And at once the man was healed, and he took up his pallet and walked. Now that day was the Sabbath. So the Jews said to the man who was cured, "It is the Sabbath, it is not lawful for you to carry your pallet." But he answered them, "The man who healed me said to me, 'Take up your pallet, and walk.'" They asked him, "Who is the man who said to you, 'Take up your pallet, and walk?'" Now the man who had been healed did not know who it was, for Jesus had withdrawn, as there was a crowd in the place. Afterward, Jesus found him in the temple, and said to him, "See, you are well! Sin no more, that nothing worse befall you." The man went away and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had healed him.

St. Alexis: John 10:1-9

Most assuredly, I say to you, he who does not enter the sheepfold by the door, but climbs up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber. But he who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. To him the doorkeeper opens, and the sheep hear his voice; and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. And when he brings out his own sheep, he goes before them; and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice. Yet they will by no means follow a stranger, but will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers." Jesus used this illustration, but they did not understand the things which He spoke to them. Then Jesus said to them again, "Most assuredly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. All who ever came before Me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not hear them. I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture..

Sunday of the Paralytic



On this day the Church remembers the man who lay by the Sheep's Pool in Jerusalem for thirty-eight years, waiting for someone to put him into the pool. The first one to enter the pool after an angel troubled the water would be healed of his infirmities, but someone always entered the pool before him.

Seeing the man, the Lord felt compassion for him and healed him.

The Kontakion for this Fourth Sunday of Pascha asks Christ to raise up our souls, "paralyzed by sins and thoughtless acts."



Rest of St Alexis Toth the confessor and defender of Orthodoxy in America

Our holy Father Alexis, the defender of the Orthodox Faith and zealous worker in the Lord's vineyard, was born in Austro-Hungary on March 18, 1854 into a poor Carpatho-Russian family. Like many others in the Austro-Hungarian empire, the Toths were Eastern Rite Catholics. Alexis' father and brother were priests and his uncle was a bishop in the Uniate church. He received an excellent education and knew several languages (Carpatho-Russian, Hungarian, Russian, German, Latin, and a reading knowledge of Greek). He married Rosalie Mihalich, a priest's daughter, and was ordained on April 18, 1878 to serve as second priest in a Uniate parish. His wife died soon afterwards, followed by their only child—losses which the saint endured with the patience of Job.

In May, 1879, Father Alexis was appointed secretary to the Bishop of Presov and also Administrator of the Diocesan Administration. He was also entrusted with the directorship of an orphanage. At Presov Seminary, Father Toth taught Church History and Canon Law, which served him well in his later life in America. Saint Alexis did not serve long as a professor or an administrator, for the Lord had a different future planned for him. In October, 1889 he was appointed to serve as pastor of a Uniate parish in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Like another Abraham, he left his country and his relatives to fulfill the will of God (Gen 12:1).

Upon his arrival in America, Father Alexis presented himself to the local Roman Catholic diocesan authority, Archbishop John Ireland, since there was no Uniate bishop in America at that time. Archbishop Ireland belonged to the party of American Catholics who favored the “Americanization” of all Roman Catholics. His vision for the future was founded on a common faith, customs, and the use of the English language for everything except liturgical celebrations. Naturally, ethnic parishes and non-Latin rite clergy did not fit into this vision. Thus, when Father Toth came to present his credentials, Archbishop Ireland greeted him with open hostility. He refused to recognize him as a legitimate Catholic priest or to grant permission for him to serve in his diocese.

As a historian and professor of Canon Law, Father Toth knew his rights under the terms of the Unia and would not accept Archbishop Ireland's unjust decisions. In October of 1890, there was a meeting of eight of the ten Uniate priests in America at Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania under the chairmanship of Father Toth. By this time the American bishops had written to Rome demanding the recall to Europe of all Uniate priests in America, fearing that Uniate priests and parishes would hinder the assimilation of immigrants into American culture. Uniate bishops in Europe refused to listen to the priests' pleas for help.

Archbishop Ireland sent a letter to his parishes ordering their members not to attend Father Toth's parish nor to accept any priestly ministrations from him. Expecting imminent deportation, Father Toth explained the situation to his parishioners and suggested it might be best for him to leave and return to Europe.

“No,” they said. “Let's go to the Russian bishop. Why should we always submit ourselves to foreigners?” It was decided to write to the Russian consul in San Francisco in order to ask for the name and address of the Russian bishop. Ivan Mlinar went to San Francisco to make initial contact with Bishop Vladimir; then in February, 1891 Father Toth and his church warden, Paul Podany, also made the journey. Subsequently, Bishop Vladimir came to Minneapolis and on March 25, 1891 received Father Toth and 361 parishioners into the Orthodox Church of their ancestors. The parishioners regarded this event as a new Triumph of Orthodoxy, crying out with joy: “Glory to God for His great mercy!”

This initiative came from the people themselves, and was not the result of any coercion from outsiders. The Russian Orthodox Church was unaware of the existence of these Slavic Uniate immigrants to America, but responded positively to their petition to be reunited to the Orthodox Church.

The example of Saint Alexis and his parish in returning to Orthodoxy was an encouragement to hundreds of other Uniates. The ever-memorable one was like a candle upon a candlestick giving light to others (Mt.5:15), and his flock may be likened to the leaven mixed with meal which leavened the whole (Mt.13:33). Through his fearless preaching he uprooted the tares which had sprung up in the wheat of true doctrine, and exposed the false teachings which had led his people astray. Although he did not hesitate to point out errors in the doctrines of other denominations, he was careful to warn his flock against intolerance. His writings and sermons are filled with admonitions to respect other people and to refrain from attacking their faith.

While it is true that he made some strong comments, especially in his private correspondence with the church administration, it must be remembered that this was done while defending the Orthodox Church and the American Mission from unfounded accusations by people who used much harsher language than Father Toth. His opponents may be characterized by intolerance, rude behaviour, unethical methods and threats against him and his parishioners.

Yet, when Father Alexis was offended or deceived by other people he forgave them, and he would often ask his bishop to forgive his omissions and mistakes.

In the midst of great hardships, this herald of godly theology and sound doctrine poured forth an inexhaustible stream of Orthodox writings for new converts, and gave practical advice on how to live in an Orthodox manner. For example, his article “How We should Live in America” stresses the importance of education, cleanliness, sobriety, and the presence of children in church on Sundays and Holy Days.

Although the Minneapolis parish was received into the Orthodox Church in March, 1891, it was not until July, 1892 that the Holy Synod of Russia recognized and accepted the parish into the Diocese of Alaska and the Aleutians. This resolution reached America only in October, 1892. During that time there was a climate of religious and ethnic hostility against the new converts. Father Alexis was accused of selling out his own Carpatho-Russian people and his religion to the “Muscovites” for financial gain.

In reality he did not receive any financial support for a long time, for his parish was very poor. Until his priestly salary began to arrive from Russia, the righteous one was obliged to work in a bakery in order to support himself. Even though his funds were meager, he did not neglect to give alms to the poor and needy. He shared his money with other clergy worse off than himself, and contributed to the building of churches and to the education of seminarians in Minneapolis. He was not anxious about his life (Mt.6:25), what he would eat or drink or wear. Trusting in God to take care of him, Saint Alexis followed the admonition of Our Savior to “seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you” (Mt.6:33). So he bore the tribulation, slander, and physical attacks with patience and spiritual joy, reminding us that “godliness is stronger than all” (Wisdom of Solomon 10:12).

Bishops Vladimir, Nicholas, Saint Tikhon, and Platon recognized the special gifts of Father Toth, so they often sent him forth to preach and teach wherever there were people of Slavic background. Even though he was aware of his shortcomings and inadequacies, yet he was obedient to the instructions of the bishops. He did not hesitate or make excuses, but went immediately to fulfill his mission. Saint Alexis visited many Uniate parishes, explaining the differences between Orthodoxy, Protestantism, Roman Catholicism and Uniatism, stressing that the true way to salvation is in Orthodoxy.

Like Josiah, “he behaved himself uprightly in the conversion of his people” (Sir 49:2). He was instrumental in the formation or return of seventeen parishes, planting a vineyard of Christ in America, and increasing its fruitful yield many times over. By 1909, the time of his blessed repose, many thousands of Carpatho-Russian and Galician Uniates had returned to Orthodoxy. This was a major event in the history of the North American Mission, which would continue to shape the future of Orthodoxy in this country for many generations to come. Any future growth or success may truly be regarded as the result of Father Toth’s apostolic labors.

Who can tell of the saint’s spiritual struggles? Who can speak of the prayers which his pious soul poured forth unto God? He did not make a public display of his piety, but prayed to God in secret with all modesty, with contrition and inward tears. God, Who sees everything done in secret, openly rewarded the saint (Mt.6:6). It is inconceivable that Saint Alexis could have accomplished his apostolic labors unless God had blessed and strengthened him for such work. Today the Church continues to reap the fruits of his teaching and preaching.

Father Toth’s efforts did not go unrecognized in his own lifetime. He received a jeweled miter from the Holy Synod, as well as the Order of Saint Vladimir and the Order of Saint Anna from Czar Nicholas II for distinguished service and devotion to God and country. In 1907, he was considered as a candidate for the episcopal office. He declined this honor, however, humbly pointing out that this responsibility should be given to a younger, healthier man.

At the end of 1908, Saint Alexis’ health began to decline due to a complication of illnesses. He went to the seashore in southern New Jersey in an attempt to regain his health, but soon returned to Wilkes-Barre, where he was confined to bed for two months. The righteous one reposed on Friday, May 7, 1909 (April 24 on the Old Calendar), the feast of Saints Sava and Alexius the Hermit of the Kiev Caves. Saint Alexis’ love and concern for his spiritual children did not cease with his death. Before closing the account of his life, it would be most appropriate to reveal but one example of his heavenly intercession:

In January, 1993 a certain man prayed to Saint Alexis to help him obtain information about his son from whom he had been separated for twenty-eight years. Placing his confidence in the saint’s boldness before God, he awaited an answer to his prayer. The very next day the man’s son telephoned him. It seems the young man was in church when he was suddenly filled with an overwhelming desire to contact his father. He had been taken to another state by his mother, and she changed his name when he was a child. This is why his father was unable to locate him. Having learned from his mother that his father was an Orthodox Christian, he was able with the help of an Orthodox priest to obtain his father’s phone number in a distant city. As a result of that telephone call, the young man later

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

visited his father, who rejoiced to see what sort of man his son had become. The father gave thanks to God and to Saint Alexis for reuniting him with his son.

Saint Alexis was a true man of God who guided many Carpatho-Russian and Galician immigrants through the dark confusion of religious challenges in the New World and back to the unity of the Orthodox Church through his grace-filled words and by his holy example. In his last will and testament Saint Alexis commended his soul to God’s mercy, asking forgiveness from everyone and forgiving everybody. His holy relics now rest at Saint Tikhon Monastery in South Canaan, Pennsylvania where the faithful may come to venerate them and to entreat Saint Alexis’ intercessions on their behalf.



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 Protection of the Mother of God Sisterhood News:

The Sisterhood is planning a small repast for the evening of the bishop's visit on Wednesday May 24th. Please see Lore Stefy for more information or if you wish to make a food contribution.

The next meeting of the Sisterhood will be on May 7th to finalize plans for Bishop Michael's visit.

NY/NJ Diocese News



ARCHBISHOP MICHAEL: 7th Anniversary of Consecration

The clergy and faithful of the Diocese of New York and New Jersey express our prayerful congratulations to our beloved Archpastor, **His Eminence, Archbishop MICHAEL**, on the seventh Anniversary of his Consecration to the Episcopacy (May 8th) and of his enthronement as the Ruling Hierarch of the Diocese of New York and New Jersey (May 9th). We are grateful to God and Vladyka for his continual outpouring of love, leadership, and dedication to the growth and salvation of his flock in this God-protected Diocese!

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On Monday, May 8th, at 9:00 a.m., His Eminence will celebrate a Divine Liturgy in Thanksgiving at Holy Trinity Church in Yonkers NY. Anyone wishing to attend should contact Father David Cowan at frdavidcowan@gmail.com

MANY YEARS

Grant, O Lord, a prosperous and peaceful life, good health, salvation, visitation, and good hastening in all things unto Thy servant, His Eminence, Archbishop Michael, celebrating the Seventh Anniversary of his Consecration to the Episcopacy and Enthronement as Archpastor of the Diocese of New York and New Jersey; and protect and preserve him for many blessed years!

Congratulations to:

Archpriest David Garretson, awarded the Palitza, by His Eminence, Archbishop Michael, on Sunday, April 30, in Saints Peter and Paul Church, South River NJ. "Axios! Axios! Axios!"



Orthodox Church in America (OCA) News **In Memoriam: Archpriest Anthony Spengler**

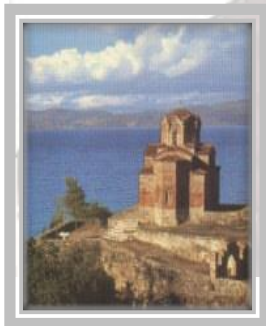
Archpriest Anthony Spengler, who was attached to Saint Panteleimon Church, Summit, IL, fell asleep in the Lord on Friday, May 5, 2017 after an extended illness.

Father Anthony is survived by his wife, Matushka Roberta [Struckman] Spengler; their children Mark [Eve] Spengler, Heidi [Luis] Posada, and Emilian [Julie Castro] Spengler; and several grandchildren. He was predeceased by their son Erich Spengler.

Visitation will be held at Saint Peter and Saint Paul Church, Burr Ridge, IL from 4:00 until 9:00 p.m. on Monday, Monday, May 8. The Burial Service for a Priest will be celebrated at 7:00 p.m. Visitation will continue at the church at 9:00 a.m. Tuesday, May 9. The Divine Liturgy will be celebrated at 9:30 a.m.

Additional information will be posted as it is received.
May Father Anthony's memory be eternal!

Prayers by the Laker, St. Velimirovich, V:



Just a little longer and my journey will end. Keep me on the steep path to You just a little longer, O Conqueror of death; because the higher I climb towards You, the more people try to drag me down—into their abyss. The fuller their abyss becomes, the greater their hope is of defeating You. In truth, the fuller the abyss becomes, the further away from the abyss You are.

How stupid the servants of the tree of knowledge are! They do not measure their strength in You, but in their num-bers. They do not adopt a law of justice in Your name, but by their numbers. Whichever way the majority of them choose is the way of truth and justice. The tree of knowledge has become the tree of crime, stupidity, and icy darkness.

Truly, the knowledgeable men of this world know every-thing except that they are servants of Satan. When the last day dawns, Satan will rejoice in the number of people in his harvest. All the meager ears of grain! But in his stupidity, even Satan counts on quantity rather than quality. One of Your ears of grain will be worth more than the entire harvest of Satan. For You, O Conqueror of death, rely on the fullness of the bread of life, and not on numbers.

In vain I tell the godless: "Head for the Tree of Life and you will know more than you could possibly wish to know. From the tree of knowledge Satan fashions a ladder for you to descend into the nether world."

The godless ridicule me and say: "Through the Tree of Life you want to convert us to your God, whom we do not see."

In truth, you will never see Him. The Light that even blinds the eyes of the seraphim will bum your pupils forever.

Of all that thrives in the putrescence of the earth, those who believe in God are the rarest. O lake and mountain, help me to be glad that I, too, am journeying with these most rare, most unlearned, and most despised believers.

Just a little longer, brethren, and our journey will end.
Sustain us just a little longer, O Conqueror of death.

Sayings of the Ascetics of the Orthodox Church, CV:

III. Us and Our Neighbors

Should We Denounce Them that have Sinned?

When you want to direct someone toward the good, first put him at peace bodily and honor him with words of love. For nothing inclines such a man to shame and induces him to cast off his vice and be changed for the better as do bodily goods and honor, which he sees in you. Then, with love tell him a word or two, and do not be inflamed with anger toward him. Do not let him see any cause of enmity toward you. For love does not know how to lose its temper.

St. Isaac the Syrian, Homilies, 85,57



The Morning Offering – Daily Inspiration by Abbott Tryphon

Artificial Christianity

Avoiding hypocrisy in our journey to God

It is very easy to live our lives in hypocrisy if we are not mindful of the pitfalls of the spiritual life. We can become Pharisees without even noticing, if we let our Christianity be artificially lived. Living our lives as though we have been rehearsed by a stage director, we will have accomplished nothing, and will remain no more than an actor. Putting on the mask of Christianity, is not living in Christ. An honest, daily examination of our conscience, together with regular guidance by our confessor, is the only way we can live a Christian life that will lead to transformation of the heart.

If we simply put on a show of being a Christian, without any true repentance, we will remain mired in false religiosity, and our heart will grow dark. Christ must be invited into the heart on a daily basis, through prayer, and honest examination of our conscience, without which there can be no spiritual growth. We cannot play at being a Christian, for to do so will lead to spiritual death.

We must “put on Christ”, daily, and make sure our public expression of our faith is not being acted out for others, but is ever entering into a deeper relationship with this very Christ. Playing at spirituality only leads to spiritual death. If our life does not give witness to Christ in us, and if our attention is given over to self-promotion, or a desire to please others, but avoids honest examination of our sins, we will be like fruit that dies on the vine.



Daily Reflection

The Messiness of “Vocation”

“And in the synagogues immediately he (Saul) proclaimed Jesus, saying, ‘He is the Son of God.’ And all who heard him were shocked, and said, ‘Is not this the man who made havoc in Jerusalem of those who called on this



name? And he has come here for this purpose, to bring them bound before the chief priests.’ But Saul increased all the more in strength, and confounded the Jews who lived in Damascus by proving that Jesus was the Christ. When many days had passed, the Jews plotted to kill him, but their plot became known to Saul. They were watching the gates day and night, to kill him; but his disciples took him by night and let him down over the wall, lowering him in a basket. And when he had come to Jerusalem he attempted to join the disciples; and they were all afraid of him, for they did not believe that he was a disciple.” (Acts 9: 20-26)

What a mess. Am I right? The first consequences of St. Paul’s response to his unique calling or “vocation” are shock, confusion, mistrust, and fear. But he carries on. ... And the rest is history, as they say.

Listening to my calling can be a messy thing. It means becoming me, as God intends me to be, in Him and in sync or “synergy” with His will and vision of/for me. But God’s “vision” does not always correspond either to my own, nor to other people’s, so it can be messy. Nonetheless, “vocation,” or God’s voice in our lives, is a most

empowering phenomenon, liberating us from the confusion of human opinion and delusion, – both our own, and that of others. Lord, let me do the next right thing today, according to Your will.

Holy Orthodox Quotes

"All you have lived according to God still live unto God, though they have departed this life."

- **St. Gregory the Theologian**

2 Timothy 1:16-18 (OSB)

The Lord grant mercy to the household of Onesiphorus, for he often refreshed me, and was not ashamed of my chain; but when he arrived in Rome, he sought me out very zealously and found me. The Lord grant to him that he may find mercy from the Lord in that Day—and you know very well how many ways he ministered to me at Ephesus.†

(Ignatius Study Bible - Ignatius Press)

1:16 Onesiphorus: He and his family may have lived in Ephesus (1:18). His diligent search for the imprisoned Paul was an expression of loyalty and courage, especially since Christians in Rome were at this time targets of fierce persecution (1:17). Some commentators infer that Onesiphorus died before 2 Timothy was written, since (1) Paul does not indicate that Onesiphorus is with him any longer; (2) he prays that the Lord will grant him mercy at the final Judgment (1:18); and (3) he asks Timothy to greet the household of Onesiphorus, but not Onesiphorus himself (4:19). If, in fact, Onesiphorus had died before Paul wrote this letter, then the apostle's prayer in 1:18 would be an early example of the Christian practice of praying for the dead.'

Luke 20:34-38 (OSB)

Jesus answered and said to them, “The sons of this age marry and are given in marriage. But those who are counted worthy to attain that age, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry nor are given in marriage; nor can they die anymore, for they are equal to the angels and are sons of God, being sons of the resurrection. But even Moses showed in the burning bush passage that the dead are raised, when he called the Lord ‘the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.’ For He is not the God of the dead but of the living, for all live to Him.”

The Philokalia: Daily Readings

Some are most careful about the food they take in but negligent about the words they give out.

- **St Elijah the Priest, Gnostic Anthology**

Ancient Christian Wisdom

It is not befitting to correlate God’s presence in our lives with how comfortable we are in this world. Problems and trials are not a sign that God has abandoned us. God allows such things to come our way so that we may receive blessings, crowns, gain spiritual experiences...and become purified (c.f. 1 Peter 5:10, James 1:12, James 1:2-8, 1 Peter 1:7)... Therefore, be strong and of good cheer during trials; do not let problems and tribulations conquer you, but conquer them by your faith (c.f. 1 Peter 1:7).

- **H.H. Pope Shenouda III**

When you sit down to eat, pray. When you eat bread, do so thanking Him for being so generous to you. If you drink wine, be mindful of Him who has given it to you for your pleasure and as a relief in sickness. When you dress, thank Him for His kindness in providing you with clothes. When you look at the sky and the beauty of the stars, throw yourself at God’s feet and adore Him who in His wisdom has arranged things in this way. Similarly, when the sun goes down and when it rises, when you are asleep or awake, give thanks to God, who created and arranged all things for your benefit, to have you know, love and praise their Creator.

+ **St. Basil the Great**

Wisdom of the Church Fathers

"Mother of God is offended by those who never ask her for anything! She is the prayerful intercessor for people; and as much as God can do through His power, so much can the Mother of God do by Her prayer".

**Elder Arsenie Papacioc
(1914-2011)**

"Think of yourself every morning as a newborn miracle, and you will not feel old age".

**St. Nikolaj Velimirovic
(1881-1956)**

Through the Grace of God – Orthodox Christianity

St Maria of Paris: Overshadowing Christ

“We must not allow Christ to be overshadowed by any regulations, any customs, any traditions, any aesthetic considerations, or even any piety.”

Mother Gavrilia: Life in Christ

“In my life, wherever I was, I accepted everything as the Will of God and lived as if I were to stay in that place forever. This is the only way God wants us to be. Never a thought about the future. The future is His! The whole earth is but a waiting room for Eternity. Are we doing what we should at every moment of our life? Do we love according to the Commandments of God? Do we follow the example of Christ? ...We must think always, “How would I behave if Christ were here, visible, near us, everywhere and at all times?” This should be the way of our life... Do not think about tomorrow, for “the morrow will take care of itself.” He Who has freed you from bondage will – if you believe – guide you, like Moses, to the Promised Land... Have no fear... If you have faith, follow the Good Shepherd and everything will be joy, peace, tranquility, and love for everyone and everything.”

Orthodox Quote of the Day

One of the old men said, "It is written concerning Solomon that he loved women, but every male loveth the females, and we must restrain and draw onwards our nature by main force to purity."

**Paradise of the Fathers
undefined p.undefined**

Let this always be the aim of your conduct: to be courteous and respectful to all.

St. Isaac the Syrian

"So first of all you must learn to sit with yourself and to face boredom..." "Once you have learned not to fidget, then you can do anything, at any speed, with any amount of attention and briskness..."

Anthony Bloom