

# STs. PETER AND PAUL ALBANIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH

First-enthroned of the apostles, teachers of the universe: Entreat the Master of all to grant peace to the world, and to our souls great mercy!

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August 23, 2020

11TH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST: LEAVETAKING OF THE  
DORMITION  
TONE 2

|               |         |  |
|---------------|---------|--|
| Today .....   | 10:00am | Divine Liturgy   |
| Wed. 26 ..... | 7:15pm  | Bible Study via Google   |
| Sun. 30 ..... | 10:00am | Divine Liturgy<br>Remembrance of the<br><i>Beheading of St. John<br/>the Baptist</i> |

**One must be baptized and chrismated an Orthodox Christian to receive Holy Communion. Guests are invited to receive a blessing at the chalice and partake of the post-Communion bread (Antidoron).**

**Fast Days:** Strict fast Sunday to Saturday.(fasting from meat, fish, eggs, dairy, oil, wine and hard spirits as you are able.) Fish, wine and oil allowed on Saturday and Thursday.

**Troparion – Tone 2  
(Resurrection)**

*When Thou didst descend to death, O Life immortal,  
Thou didst slay hell with the splendor of Thy Godhead.  
And when from the depths Thou didst raise the dead,  
all the powers of heaven cried out:  
“O Giver of life, Christ our God, glory to Thee!”*

**Kontakion – Tone 2  
(Dormition)**

*Neither the tomb, nor death,  
could hold the Theotokos,  
who is constant in prayer and our firm hope in her intercessions.  
For being the Mother of Life,  
she was translated to life by the One Who dwelt in her virginal womb.*

**Prayers for those** in our Sts. Peter and Paul community (parishioners, family, friends) can be listed for remembrance in our litanies during the Liturgy. Feel free to give names to Fr. Nicholas - please indicate how each person listed is connected to us (parishioner, family, friend, etc.), as well as why we are praying for them (health, memory, travel, etc.).

**Confessions can be heard** by appointment. If you need, I will come to you during the week. Please do not hesitate to call for a time to drop by the church or to have me visit you.

**Remembrances** for both the living and the dead during the prayers of preparation of the Eucharistic Lamb and during the Augmented Litany should be given the week before the desired remembrance so that the names can be put into the bulletin and given to the Deacons for the prayers. Any names of the living that are not marked as sick or traveling will be listed under general prayers.

SCRIPTURE THIS WEEK

## Church Lectionary

### Today

1 Corinthians 9:2-12  
Matthew 18:23-35

### Monday

2 Corinthians 5:10-15  
Mark 1:9-15

### Tuesday

2 Corinthians 5:15-21  
Mark 1:16-22

### Wednesday

2 Corinthians 6:11-16  
Mark 1:23-28

### Thursday

2 Corinthians 7:1-10  
Mark 1:29-35

### Friday

2 Corinthians 7:10-16  
Mark 2:18-22

### Saturday

Acts 13:25-33  
Mark 6:14-30  
1 Corinthians 1:26-29  
Matthew 20:29-34

## Reading the Bible in a Year

Aug 23: Judith 1-4  
Aug 24: Judith 5-8  
Aug 25: Judith 9-12  
Aug 26: Judith 13-16  
Aug 27: Grk Esther 1-4  
Aug 28: Grk Esther 5-8  
Aug 29: Grk Esther 9-12

As a help to those who wish to worship, but cannot gather in the church, we stream the Divine Liturgy on our YouTube channel. You can look up the channel at YouTube.com. We are SS Peter & Paul Orthodox Church of Philadelphia or you can follow the link: [https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCpQqQHigwM5deWD2Se8\\_MVhw](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCpQqQHigwM5deWD2Se8_MVhw)

Liturgy is at 10:00am every Sunday. If the livestream has not begun, you will have to refresh your browser until it gives you a notice that we are live.

If you would like to attend services on feast days when we cannot hold services, I recommend watching the streamed services from Transfiguration Monastery located at <http://www.orthodoxmonasteryellwoodcity.org/> They have a calendar that has their service schedule on it and the services can be viewed via their online chapel.

### August

23 – 10:00am Divine Liturgy  
 26 – 7:15pm Bible Study  
 29 – *Beheading of St. John the Baptist*  
 30 – 10:00am Divine Liturgy

### September

01 – *New Church Year*

### August/September Events

02 – 7:15pm Bible Study  
 06 – 10:00am Divine Liturgy  
 Celebration of the *Feast of the Nativity of the Theotokos*  
 08 – *Feast of the Nativity of the Theotokos*  
 09 – 7:15pm Bible Study

13 – 10:00am Divine Liturgy  
 Celebration of the *Feast of the Exultation of the Precious Cross*  
 14 – *Feast of the Exultation of the Precious Cross*  
 16 – 7:15pm Bible Study  
 20 – 10:00am Divine Liturgy  
 23 – 7:15pm Bible Study  
 27 – 10:00am Divine Liturgy  
 30 – 7:15pm Bible Study

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**“If a man insults me, kills my father, my mother, my brother, and then gouges out my eye, as a Christian it is my duty to forgive him. We who are pious Christians ought to love our enemies and forgive them. We ought to offer them food and drink, and entreat God for their souls. And then we should say: ‘My God, I beseech Thee to forgive me, as I have forgiven my enemies.’”**

-St. Kosmas Aitolos



## Fact, Fiction and Phariseeism

Posted by the Orthodox Christian Network. <https://myocn.net/fact-fiction-phariseeism/>

Can a story be ‘true’ without being factual or historical? Certainly—as we all know, Jesus taught with parables; indeed, He hardly taught anything –without- using parables. We can even find truth –in- all kinds of stories we might not call ‘true’—for instance, in pagan myths, or in contemporary fiction or film. Just last weekend I attended Doxacon, a conference put on by St. Mary’s Orthodox parish in Falls Church, VA, with the theme “The Truth is Out There: Where Faith and Truth Meet Science Fiction and Fantasy”. The chairman’s opening remarks made reference to St. Basil the Great, who taught his students that pagan mythology could be a good source of truth and moral example—but with the caveat that they must use discernment in their reading.

In the last few decades, the previously unknown literary genre of “Creative Non-Fiction” emerged into prominence with books such as Frank McCourt’s Pulitzer winner *Angela’s Ashes*. Blurring the distinctions between fact and fiction for the sake of a more compelling story, these sorts of books are sometimes revealed to have taken more than a few liberties with the facts.

Or consider the current obsession with ‘reality’ TV shows. How real are the people, how true the events featured, when the very presence of cameras can’t help but introduce a certain falsity into the situation?

Meanwhile, on the internet, fact and fiction mingle freely every day, particularly in the form of items passed on instantly without any discernment via social media.

Enter Jeremiah Steepok, pastor disguised as a homeless man. His 10 thousand member mega-church snubbed him, with only two or three people speaking to him, and NONE giving him the change he begged for. He then came up to the pulpit, rags and all, to deliver a stinging sermon to the church full of heartless hypocrites. This story, accompanied by a striking black and white photo portrait—presumably of Mr. Steepok—spread like, well, a virus, but it wasn’t long before the skeptics on sites like hoaxbusters and snopes.com were pointing out the almost-obvious: Google can’t find Steepok and his unnamed megachurch anywhere but in this same story.

The backlash against the debunkers began: “It’s a BRILLIANT story, a WONDERFUL story! How DARE you judge, it doesn’t MATTER if it isn’t true, it has a good lesson!!!!”

Certainly the story was a parable, with the unexceptional moral “We shouldn’t neglect the homeless.” Sort of reminds you of The Good Samaritan, doesn’t it? But there are some noteworthy differences.

When Jesus taught in parables, he was teaching in an accepted genre in the rabbinical tradition. The Good Samaritan comes in response to a specific question from an audience member who, told to love his neighbour, wants to know “and who is my neighbour then?” The questioner is of course trying to determine who is –not- his neighbour, so he won’t have to love that person.

The whole audience knows they are about to hear a fictional story that will teach them a lesson, when Jesus says “A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho.....” They also know Jesus is critical of the religious establishment, but even his audience of the disenfranchised are not prepared for a foreigner and heretic like a Samaritan to become the hero of the story. The impact of the tale is in this surprise ending.

The Pastor Steepek story, however, which appeared full-blown on the internet to a world that didn’t ask for it, seems to have no hero—only a prophet-preacher disguised as a victim of an exaggerated number of oppressors. The big reveal at the ending of this story is intended to shame the church members and berate them for their coldness. Pastor Steepek doesn’t let his little trick with the false identity speak for itself, but pounds in the lesson with several paragraphs of sermon at the end of the story.

In contrast, Jesus doesn’t preach. The priest and Pharisee are shown passing by on the other side, but instead of belabouring the shameful cold-heartedness of these characters, the Lord focuses his main attention on the unexpected hero, the Samaritan, relating in great detail the kindness and generosity of this ethnic and religious outcast.

Why does a story like the Pastor Steepek one get passed on with such speed and excitement? The superficial appearance of it being a ‘real’ story with a named protagonist does help to speed it on its way. But mostly I think this is the kind of story that appeals to the New Pharisees.

Pharisees are always with us. Christians in film and TV are overwhelmingly portrayed as stereotypical hypocrites who preach such things as sexual morality and honesty, looking down on others while all along stealing and committing adultery. Christians are relentlessly labelled as the Pharisees of today.

But there are other Pharisees of course, those who like the Pharisee in another parable, thank God (or thank themselves, if they do not believe in God) that they are ‘not like those Christians’. There are even Christians who thank God that they are ‘not like those other so-called Christians, those mega-church Christians.’ The Steepek story invites just such self-congratulation from some readers, while playing upon the collective guilt of others.

No doubt there are some Christians who would not help out a homeless man who asked for change at church. But to what extent is this part of the Steepek story really ‘true’ even if not factual? What if there were a similar story that really did happen?

In fact the hoax busters turned up one such story about a pastor who dressed up as a homeless man. His name is Willie Lyle and he pastors a real church in Tennessee. Not a megachurch, but one of modest size, with about 200 members. He decided to spend a few days as a homeless person on the street, and ended up lying on the lawn of his church on Sunday morning. Though unrecognized by his flock, he received the offer of help from about twenty of them. That’s a tenth of the congregation, and more than enough to actually give him some kind of help if it were needed. In addition, Pastor Lyle told of how he quickly found resources provided by Christian charitable agencies on the streets. More was needed, of course, but his story contains no blame or shame of supposed ‘Pharisees’, only positive examples.

The Pastor Steepek parable remains a bit mysterious—who wrote it, and why? The photo seems to be taken from the site of a photographer who snapped the picture of a homeless man in Surrey, UK. Unless the photographer is also the author of the parable, or gave his permission for the photo’s use, there is certainly a question of ethics regarding its use, with both the photographer and his subject possibly being wronged by its indiscriminate posting around the net. Did the author of the parable intend to trick people, the same way Pastor Steepek in the story tricked people to make a point? If so, he didn’t try very hard. The unusual name of the pastor plus the lack of name for the megachurch guaranteed the hoax would soon be found out. Was this done by a dumb (but of course hypocritical) Christian? Was it done by a malicious anti-Christian person who wanted to show Christians as not only hypocritical and careless about the needy, but also gullible enough to pass around a made-up story as if it were real? We don’t know. The use of the photo is manipulative and deceptive, but does that matter? Is it a good story anyway?

The deception certainly only succeeded as much as it did because of the nature of social media and our constant information overload. We see a photo and a name shared by a friend, scan the high points of the story, and click ‘like’. Too few people in the chain of shares examine what they pass on very closely, and with Christians this is perhaps partly because we have had too much emphasis on being ‘harmless as doves’ rather than ‘wise as serpents.’ The truth is, Christians can be gullible.

In our media-saturated world, we need discernment more than ever. Stories of all kinds, fact or fiction, can be edifying, but absorbing them whole and uncritically can poison our perspective. “It doesn’t matter if it’s true, it’s a great story!” Really? So, does it matter if the Resurrection is true, as long as it’s a great story?

As for Pastor Steepek’s story, I have to say I don’t think it’s a particularly good story. Placed next to the Good Samaritan and to the factual story of Pastor Lyle, the tale of Pastor Steepek comes off as rather predictable, heavy-handed, mean-spirited and preachy.

Still, perhaps the best thing to come from this thinly-disguised parable is not its own heavy-handed moral, but that it has drawn attention to the story of Pastor Lyle. Meanwhile, as we surf the net, let’s renew our efforts at discernment and remember to pause before we click ‘share’.



## **1 Corinthians 9:2-12 (Epistle)**

If I am not an apostle to others, yet doubtless I am to you. For you are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord. My defense to those who examine me is this: Do we have no right to eat and drink? Do we have no right to take along a believing wife, as do also the other apostles, the brothers of the Lord, and Cephas? Or is it only Barnabas and I who have no right to refrain from working? Who ever goes to war at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard and does not eat of its fruit? Or who tends a flock and does not drink of the milk of the flock? Do I say these things as a mere man? Or does not the law say the same also? For it is written in the law of Moses, "You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain." Is it oxen God is concerned about? Or does He say it altogether for our sakes? For our sakes, no doubt, this is written, that he who plows should plow in hope, and he who threshes in hope should be partaker of his hope. If we have sown spiritual things for you, is it a great thing if we reap your material things? If others are partakers of this right over you, are we not even more? Nevertheless we have not used this right, but endure all things lest we hinder the gospel of Christ.

## **Matthew 18:23-35 (Gospel)**

Therefore the kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. And when he had begun to settle accounts, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents. But as he was not able to pay, his master commanded that he be sold, with his wife and children and all that he had, and that payment be made. The servant therefore fell down before him, saying, 'Master, have patience with me, and I will pay you all.' Then the master of that servant was moved with compassion, released him, and forgave him the debt. But that servant went out and found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii; and he laid hands on him and took him by the throat, saying, 'Pay me what you owe!' So his fellow servant fell down at his feet and begged him, saying, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you all.' And he would not, but went and threw him into prison till he should pay the debt. So when his fellow servants saw what had been done, they were very grieved, and came and told their master all that had been done. Then his master, after he had called him, said to him, 'You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you begged me. Should you not also have had compassion on your fellow servant, just as I had pity on you?' And his master was angry, and delivered him to the torturers until he should pay all that was due to him. So My heavenly Father also will do to you if each of you, from his heart, does not forgive his brother his trespasses."

## **Children's Word**

### **Forgive, and be forgiven!**

Have you ever told on somebody... about something you've done too? You might have told your parents or your teacher on a brother or sister or classmate. "He hit me!" "She called me a mean name!" "He wrote on the wall!" "She broke my Lego creation!" But maybe you did that too!

In today's Gospel reading, we hear a story about just that same thing. A king asked his servants to pay him back what they owed him. Well, sadly, it was a lot of money, and one servant couldn't pay it all. He begged the king, "Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything!" The king felt sorry for him, and he said the servant didn't have to pay it. The king forgave him.

After that, that same servant found somebody who owed him money. He told him to pay him the money back. Remember, even though the king forgave him, he wouldn't forgive the other guy!

That story in the Bible is about forgiving others. It is about treating others as you would want to be treated. It is about not complaining about our friends and our classmates, when we've done the same wrong thing!

Let's remember how much our Lord forgives us every day. When we remember that, we will know we shouldn't talk about other people who do the same wrong things!

### **SAINT FANOURIOS THE LOST (AND FOUND)**

Did you know there are hundreds and hundreds of saints that we don't even know about? Sometimes we find out about them. Other times, only God knows about them.

We don't know much about Saint Fanourios. In fact, for a long time, nobody knew anything about him. But in the year 1500, some people found an icon of him in an old, broken-down church on the island of Rhodes, in Greece.

In the icon, he looks like a young man. He is holding a candle in one hand. Why does he have a candle? Well, because he helps show people the light of Christ. Even his name means, "the one who brings things to light."

Lots of people pray to Saint Fanourios. You can especially pray to him when you have lost something. Some people even ask the saint to help him find big things—like a job, or a husband or wife! Then, when the saint answers a prayer, a person might make a special cake called Fanouropita. You can bring it to church, the priest will say a special prayer, and you can share the cake with everybody else!

We celebrate St. Fanourios on Thursday, Aug. 27.

## **1-е Коринфянам 9:2-12**

Если для других я не Апостол, то для вас [Апостол]; ибо печать моего апостольства--вы в Господе. Вот мое защищение против осуждающих меня. Или мы не имеем власти есть и пить? Или не имеем власти иметь спутницею сестру жену, как и прочие Апостолы, и братья Господни, и Кифа? Или один я и Варнава не имеем власти не работать? Какой воин служит когда-либо на своем содержании? Кто, насадив виноград, не ест плодов его? Кто, пася стадо, не ест молока от стада? По человеческому ли только [рассуждению] я это говорю? Не то же ли говорит и закон? Ибо в Моисеевом законе написано: не заграждай рта у вола молотящего. О волах ли печется Бог? Или, конечно, для нас говорится? Так, для нас это написано; ибо, кто пашет, должен пахать с надеждою, и кто молотит, [должен молотить] с надеждою получить ожидаемое. Если мы посеяли в вас духовное, велико ли то, если пожнем у вас телесное? Если другие имеют у вас власть, не паче ли мы? Однако мы не пользовались сею властью, но все переносим, дабы не поставить какой преграды благовествованию Христову.

## **От Матфея 18:23-35**

Посему Царство Небесное подобно царю, который захотел сосчитаться с рабами своими; когда начал он считаться, приведен был к нему некто, который должен был ему десять тысяч талантов; а как он не имел, чем заплатить, то государь его приказал продать его, и жену его, и детей, и всё, что он имел, и заплатить; тогда раб тот пал, и, кланяясь ему, говорил: государь! потерпи на мне, и всё тебе заплачу. Государь, умилосердившись над рабом тем, отпустил его и долг простил ему. Раб же тот, выйдя, нашел одного из товарищей своих, который должен был ему сто динариев, и, схватив его, душил, говоря: отдай мне, что должен. Тогда товарищ его пал к ногам его, умолял его и говорил: потерпи на мне, и всё отдам тебе. Но тот не захотел, а пошел и посадил его в темницу, пока не отдаст долга. Товарищи его, увидев происшедшее, очень огорчились и, придя, рассказали государю своему всё бывшее. Тогда государь его призывает его и говорит: злой раб! весь долг тот я простил тебе, потому что ты упросил меня; не надлежало ли и тебе помиловать товарища твоего, как и я помиловал тебя? И, разгневавшись, государь его отдал его истязателям, пока не отдаст ему всего долга. Так и Отец Мой Небесный поступит с вами, если не простит каждый из вас от сердца своего брату своему согрешений его.

## **1 e Korintasve 9:2-12**

Në qoftë se për të tjerët nuk jam apostull, së paku për ju unë jam; sepse ju jeni vula e apostullimit tim në Zotin. Kjo është mbrojtja ime ndaj atyre që më hetojnë. A nuk kemi edhe ne të drejtë të hamë e të pimë? A nuk kemi edhe ne të drejtë të marrim me vete një bashkëshorte, që të jetë motër në besim, sikurse edhe apostujt e tjerë, dhe vëllezërit e Zotit, edhe Kefa? Apo vetëm unë dhe Barnaba nuk kemi të drejtë të mos punojmë? Kush, vallë, shkon në luftë me shpenzimet e veta? Kush mbjell vresht dhe nuk ha nga fryti i tij? Kush kullot një tufë dhe nuk ha nga qumështi i tufës? A i them këto si njeri? A nuk i thotë këto edhe ligji? Sepse në ligjin e Moisiut është shkruar: “Mos ia lidh gojën kaut që shin.” A u merrka Perëndia me qetë, vallë? Apo e thotë këtë për ne? Vërtetë për ne janë shkruar, sepse kush lëron duhet të lërojë me shpresë, dhe kush shin, duhet të shijë me shpresë që të marrë atë që shpreson. Në qoftë se ne kemi mbjellë midis jush gjërat frymërore, a është gjë e madhe nëse korrim të mirat tuaja materiale? Në qoftë se të tjerë kanë pjesë të kësaj të drejte mbi ju, a nuk do ta kishim ne shumë më tepër? Po ne nuk e përdornim këtë të drejtë; po durojmë çdo gjë, për të mos i vënë asnjë pengesë ungjillit të Krishtit.

## **Mateu 18:23-35**

Prandaj mbretëria e qiejve i ngjan një mbreti që desh të bënte llogaritë me shërbëtorët e vet. Mbasi filloi t'i bëjë llogaritë, i sollën një që i detyrohej dhjetë mijë talenta. Dhe, duke qenë se ky nuk kishte të paguante, zotëria e tij urdhëroi që të shitej ai me gruan e tij, bijtë e tij dhe gjithë ç'kishte, dhe të shlyejë detyrimin. Atëherë ai shërbëtor i ra ndër këmbë e i lutej duke thënë: "Zot, ki durim me mua dhe unë do t'i paguaj të gjitha". I shtyrë nga dhembshuria, zotëria e atij shërbëtori e la të lirë atë dhe ia fali detyrimin. Por ai shërbëtor, si doli, takoi një nga shërbëtorët e tjerë, që i detyrohej njëqind denarë; dhe, mbasi e zuri për fyti, po e mbyste duke thënë: "Më paguaj detyrimin që më ke". Atëherë shërbëtori shok i tij, i ra ndër këmbë dhe iu lut duke thënë: "Ki durim me mua, dhe do t'i paguaj të gjitha". Por ai nuk desh, madje shkoi dhe e futi në burg deri sa ai ta shlyente detyrimin. Por shërbëtorët e tjerë, kur e panë ngjarjen, u pikëlluan shumë dhe shkuan e i thanë zotërisë së tyre gjithçka që kishte ndodhur. Atëherë zotëria e tij e thirri dhe i tha: "Shërbëtor i lig, unë ta fala gjithë këtë detyrim, sepse m'u lute. A nuk duhej të kishe mëshirë edhe ti për shokun tënd, ashtu si pata mëshirë unë për ty?". Dhe zotëria i tij, i zemëruar, ua dorëzoi torturuesve deri sa të paguante gjithë detyrimin. Kështu do të veprojë me ju edhe Ati im qiellor, në qoftë se secili prej jush nuk e fal me gjithë zemër vëllanë e vet për fajet e tij."