

# Saints Peter and Paul Orthodox Church

Albanian Archdiocese - OCA

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**SUNDAY, MAY 28**

**7th Sunday of Pascha**

**Holy Fathers of the First Ecumenical Council**

**Afterfeast of the Ascension**

## **Tone 6 Troparion (Resurrection)**

*The Angelic Powers were at Thy tomb;  
the guards became as dead men.  
Mary stood by Thy grave,  
seeking Thy most pure body.  
Thou didst capture hell not  
being tempted by it.  
Thou didst come to the Virgin,  
granting life.  
O Lord, Who didst rise from the dead,  
glory to Thee.*

## **Tone 4 Troparion (Ascension)**

*Thou didst ascend in glory, O Christ our God,  
granting joy to Thy Disciples by  
the promise of the Holy Spirit.  
Through the blessing, they were assured  
that Thou art the Son of God,  
the Redeemer of the world!*

## **Tone 8 Troparion (Fathers)**

*Thou art most glorious, O Christ our God,  
Who hast established the Holy Fathers as lights on the earth.  
Through them Thou hast guided us to the True Faith.  
O greatly compassionate One,  
glory to Thee!*

## **Tone 8 Kontakion (Fathers)**

*The Apostles' preaching and the Fathers' doctrines  
have established one Faith for the Church.  
Adorned with the robe of truth, woven from  
heavenly theology,  
It defines and glorifies the great mystery of piety.*

## **Tone 6 Kontakion (Ascension)**

*When Thou hadst fulfilled the dispensation for  
our sake,  
and united earth to heaven,  
Thou didst ascend in glory, O Christ our God,  
not being parted from those who love Thee,  
but remaining with them and crying:  
"I am with you, and there is no one against you!"*

## **☞ Prokeimenon ☞**

### **Tone 4 (Song of the Three Holy Children)**

Blessed art Thou, O Lord God of our fathers, / and praised and glorified is Thy Name forever!

*(Song of the Three Holy Children, v. 3)*

V. For Thou art just in all that Thou hast done for us! *(v. 4)*

## The Epistle Reading

### **Acts 20:16-18, 28-36**

For Paul had decided to sail past Ephesus, so that he would not have to spend time in Asia; for he was hurrying to be at Jerusalem, if possible, on the Day of Pentecost. From Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called for the elders of the church. And when they had come to him, he said to them: "You know, from the first day that I came to Asia, in what manner I always lived among you, Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves. Therefore watch, and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears. So now, brethren, I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified. I have coveted no one's silver or gold or apparel. Yes, you yourselves know that these hands have provided for my necessities, and for those who were with me. I have shown you in every way, by laboring like this, that you must support the weak. And remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'" And when he had said these things, he knelt down and prayed with them all.

### **Veprat e Apostujve 20:16-18, 28-36**

Sepse Pavli e kishte parë të udhës të lundrojë anash Efesit, që të mos e humbte kohën në Azi; sepse nxitonte, në ishte e mundur për të, ditën e Pendikostisë të gjendet në Jerusalem. Edhe prej Militës dërgoi në Efes e thirri pleqtë e kishës. Edhe kur këta erdhën tek ai, u tha atyre: Ju e dini që ditën e parë që shkela në Azi se si e shkova gjithë kohën bashkë me ju, Kini pra kujdes për veten tuaj dhe për gjithë tufën, mbi të cilën Fryma e Shenjtë ju vuri ju kujdestarë, që të kullotni kishën e Perëndisë, të cilën e fitoi me gjakun e tij. Sepse unë e di këtë, se pas ikjes sime kanë për të hyrë tek ju ujqër të këqij, të cilët s'kanë për ta kursyer tufën. Edhe prej jush vetë do të ngrihen njerëz duke folur gjëra të shtrembra, që të tërheqin nxënësit pas vetes së tyre. Prandaj rrini zgjuar e sillni ndër mend se tre vjet natë e ditë s'pushova duke këshilluar me lot gjithsecilin. Edhe tani, o vëllezër, ju lë juve në Perëndinë, edhe në fjalën e hirit të tij, i cili mund t'ju ndërtojë e t'ju japë juve trashëgim në mes të gjithë të shenjtëruarve. Argjend ose ar, ose rrobë të askujt nuk dëshirova. Edhe ju vetë e dini se këto duart e mia kanë punuar për nevojat e mia dhe për ata që ishin bashkë me mua. Me çdo mënyrë ju tregova juve se kështu duke u munduar duhet t'u ndihmoni të pafuqishmëve, edhe të kujtoni fjalët e Zotit Jisu, se ai vetë tha: "Lumturi më e madhe është të japë njeriu se të marrë". Edhe si tha këto, u ul në gjunjë e u fal bashkë me ata të gjithë.

### **Деяния 20:16-18, 20:28-36**

ибо Павлу рассудилось миновать Ефес, чтобы не замедлить ему в Азии; потому что он поспешал, если можно, в день Пятидесятницы быть в Иерусалиме. Из Милита же послав в Ефес, он призвал пресвитеров церкви, и, когда они пришли к нему, он сказал им: вы знаете, как я с первого дня, в который пришел в Асию, все время был с вами, Итак внимайте себе и всему стаду, в котором Дух Святой поставил вас блюстителями, пасти Церковь Господа и Бога, которую Он приобрел Себе Кровию Своею. Ибо я знаю, что, по отшествии моем, войдут к вам лютые волки, не щадящие стада; и из вас самих восстанут люди, которые будут говорить превратно, дабы увлечь учеников за собою. Посему бодрствуйте, памятуя, что я три года день и ночь непрестанно со слезами учил каждого из вас. И ныне предаю вас, братия, Богу и слову благодати Его, могущему назидать [вас] более и дать вам наследие со всеми освященными. Ни серебра, ни золота, ни одежды я ни от кого не пожелал: сами знаете, что нуждам моим и [нуждам] бывших при мне послужили руки мои сии. Во всем показал я вам, что, так трудясь, надобно поддерживать слабых и памятовать слова Господа Иисуса, ибо Он Сам сказал: 'блаженнее давать, нежели принимать'. Сказав это, он преклонил колени свои и со всеми ими помолился.

### **Tone 8**

Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia!

V. The Lord, the God of gods, speaks and summons the earth from the rising of the sun to its setting. (Ps. 49:1)

V. Gather to Me My venerable ones, who made a covenant with Me by sacrifice! (Ps. 49:6)

**John 17:1-13**

Jesus spoke these words, lifted up His eyes to heaven, and said: "Father, the hour has come. Glorify Your Son, that Your Son also may glorify You, as You have given Him authority over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as You have given Him. And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent. I have glorified You on the earth. I have finished the work which You have given Me to do. And now, O Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was. I have manifested Your name to the men whom You have given Me out of the world. They were Yours, You gave them to Me, and they have kept Your word. Now they have known that all things which You have given Me are from You. For I have given to them the words which You have given Me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came forth from You; and they have believed that You sent Me. I pray for them. I do not pray for the world but for those whom You have given Me, for they are Yours. And all Mine are Yours, and Yours are Mine, and I am glorified in them. Now I am no longer in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to You. Holy Father, keep through Your name those whom You have given Me, that they may be one as We are. While I was with them in the world, I kept them in Your name. Those whom You gave Me I have kept; and none of them is lost except the son of perdition, that the Scripture might be fulfilled. But now I come to You, and these things I speak in the world, that they may have My joy fulfilled in themselves.

**Joanit 17:1-13**

Këto foli Jisui; pastaj ngriti sytë e tij në qiell e tha: Atë, erdhi ora, lavdëro Birin tënd, që të të lavdërojë edhe yt Bir, siç i dhe pushtet mbi çdo mish, që t'u japë jetë të përjetshme gjithë atyre që ia ke dhënë. Dhe kjo është jeta e përjetshme, që të të njohin ty të vetmin Perëndi të vërtetë; edhe Jisu Krishtin që dërgove. Unë të lavdërova mbi dhe, punën që më dhe të bëj e mbarova. Edhe tani lavdëromë ti, o Atë, pranë teje, me lavdinë që pata pranë teje para se të ishte bota. Emrin tënd ua zbulova njerëzve që më dhe prej botës. Të tutë ishin e m'i dhe, dhe fjalën tënde e ruajtën. Tani e njohën se gjithë sa më ke dhënë janë prej teje. Sepse fjalët që më dhe, ua dhashë atyre; edhe ata i morën dhe e njohën me të vërtetë se prej teje dola; edhe besuan se ti më dërgove. Unë lutem për ata; nuk lutem për botën, po për ata që më dhe, sepse janë të tutë. Edhe gjithë të miat janë të tuat, edhe të tuat janë të miat; edhe u lavdërova në to. Edhe nuk jam më në botë, po këta janë në botë, edhe unë po vij tek ti. Atë i shenjtë, ruaji në emrin tënd ata që më dhe, që të jenë një si ne. Kur isha bashkë me ata në botë, unë i ruaja në emrin tënd; ata që më dhe i ruajta, edhe asnjë nga ata s'humbi, veç i biri i humbjes, që të përmbushet Shkrimi. Edhe tani po vij tek ti, edhe i flas këto në botë, që ta kenë gëzimin tim të plotë në veten e tyre.

**От Иоанна 17:1-13**

После сих слов Иисус возвел очи Свои на небо и сказал: Отче! пришел час, прославь Сына Твоего, да и Сын Твой прославит Тебя, так как Ты дал Ему власть над всякою плотью, да всему, что Ты дал Ему, даст Он жизнь вечную. Сия же есть жизнь вечная, да знают Тебя, единого истинного Бога, и посланного Тобой Иисуса Христа. Я прославил Тебя на земле, совершил дело, которое Ты поручил Мне исполнить. И ныне прославь Меня Ты, Отче, у Тебя Самого славою, которую Я имел у Тебя прежде бытия мира. Я открыл имя Твое человекам, которых Ты дал Мне от мира; они были Твои, и Ты дал их Мне, и они сохранили слово Твое. Ныне уразумели они, что все, что Ты дал Мне, от Тебя есть, ибо слова, которые Ты дал Мне, Я передал им, и они приняли, и уразумели истинно, что Я исшел от Тебя, и уверовали, что Ты послал Меня. Я о них молю: не о всем мире молю, но о тех, которых Ты дал Мне, потому что они Твои. И все Мое Твое, и Твое Мое; и Я прославился в них. Я уже не в мире, но они в мире, а Я к Тебе иду. Отче Святыи! соблюди их во имя Твое, [тех], которых Ты Мне дал, чтобы они были едино, как и Мы. Когда Я был с ними в мире, Я соблюдал их во имя Твое; тех, которых Ты дал Мне, Я сохранил, и никто из них не погиб, кроме сына погибели, да сбудется Писание. Ныне же к Тебе иду, и сие говорю в мире, чтобы они имели в себе радость Мою совершенную.

*(Instead of "It is truly meet...", we sing the following)*

Magnify, O my soul, Christ the Giver of Life, Who hath ascended from earth to heaven!

We the faithful, with one accord, magnify thee, the Mother of God, who, beyond reason and understanding, ineffably gave birth in time to the Timeless One.

### Communion Hymn

Praise the Lord from the heavens, praise Him in the highest! *(Ps. 148:1)*

Rejoice in the Lord, O you righteous; praise befits the just! *(Ps. 32:1)*

Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia!

## **Commemoration of the Holy Fathers of the First Ecumenical Council**

On the seventh Sunday of Pascha, we commemorate the holy God-bearing Fathers of the First Ecumenical Council.

The Commemoration of the First Ecumenical Council has been celebrated by the Church of Christ from ancient times. The Lord Jesus Christ left the Church a great promise, "I will build My Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Mt. 16:18). Although the Church of Christ on earth will pass through difficult struggles with the Enemy of salvation, it will emerge victorious. The holy martyrs bore witness to the truth of the Savior's words, enduring suffering and death for confessing Christ, but the persecutor's sword is shattered by the Cross of Christ.

Persecution of Christians ceased during the fourth century, but heresies arose within the Church itself. One of the most pernicious of these heresies was Arianism. Arius, a priest of Alexandria, was a man of immense pride and ambition. In denying the divine nature of Jesus Christ and His equality with God the Father, Arius falsely taught that the Savior is not consubstantial with the Father, but is only a created being.

A local Council, convened with Patriarch Alexander of Alexandria presiding, condemned the false teachings of Arius. However, Arius would not submit to the authority of the Church. He wrote to many bishops, denouncing the decrees of the local Council. He spread his false teaching throughout the East, receiving support from certain Eastern bishops.

Investigating these dissensions, the holy emperor Constantine (May 21) consulted Bishop Hosius of Cordova (Aug. 27), who assured him that the heresy of Arius was directed against the most fundamental dogma of Christ's Church, and so he decided to convene an Ecumenical Council. In the year 325, 318 bishops representing Christian Churches from various lands gathered together at Nicea.

Among the assembled bishops were many confessors who had suffered during the persecutions, and who bore the marks of torture upon their bodies. Also participating in the Council were several great luminaries of the Church: Saint Nicholas, Archbishop of Myra in Lycia (December 6 and May 9), Saint Spyridon, Bishop of Tremithos (December 12), and others venerated by the Church as holy Fathers.

With Patriarch Alexander of Alexandria came his deacon, Athanasius [who later became Patriarch of Alexandria (May 2 and January 18)]. He is called "the Great," for he was a zealous champion for the purity of Orthodoxy. In the Sixth Ode of the Canon for today's Feast, he is referred to as "the thirteenth Apostle."

The emperor Constantine presided over the sessions of the Council. In his speech, responding to the welcome by Bishop Eusebius of Caesarea, he said, "God has helped me cast down the impious might of the persecutors, but more distressful for me than any blood spilled in battle is for a soldier, is the internal strife in the Church of God, for it is more ruinous."

Arius, with seventeen bishops among his supporters, remained arrogant, but his teaching was repudiated and he was excommunicated from the Church. In his speech, the holy deacon Athanasius conclusively refuted the blasphemous opinions of Arius. The heresiarch Arius is depicted in iconography sitting on Satan's knees, or in the mouth of the Beast of the Deep (Rev. 13).

The Fathers of the Council declined to accept a Symbol of Faith (Creed) proposed by the Arians. Instead, they affirmed the Orthodox Symbol of Faith. Saint Constantine asked the Council to insert into the text of the Symbol of Faith the word "consubstantial," which he had heard in the speeches of the bishops. The Fathers of the Council unanimously accepted this suggestion.

In the Nicene Creed, the holy Fathers set forth and confirmed the Apostolic teachings about Christ's divine nature. The heresy of Arius was exposed and repudiated as an error of haughty reason. After resolving this chief dogmatic question, the Council also issued Twelve Canons on questions of churchly administration and discipline. Also decided was the date for the celebration of Holy Pascha. By decision of the Council, Holy Pascha should not be celebrated by Christians on the same day with the Jewish Passover, but on the first Sunday after the first full moon of the vernal equinox (which occurred on March 22 in 325).

PRAYERS	Birthdays, Names-days, & Anniversaries	SCRIPTURE THIS WEEK
<i>For Those Who Have Fallen Asleep</i>		<b>Church Lectionary</b>
<p>Newly Departed Margaret, Newly Departed David, Newly departed Miles, Newly Departed child Luke, Robert</p> <p><i>[To be inserted after the petition for the departed]</i> Again we pray for those who have lost their lives because of the war in Ukraine: that the Lord our God may look upon them with mercy, and give them rest where there is neither sickness, or sorrow, but life everlasting.</p>	<p>May 28 – June 3 Nina Nadina (B) Tish Desloges (B) Matthew Murianka (B) Issak Rubis (N) Fr. Nicholas &amp; Prif. Katie (A)</p> <p><b><u>Seven-Day Vigil Candles</u></b></p> <p>Michael – Prayers for health</p>	<p><u>Today</u> Acts 20:16-18, 28-36 John 17:1-13</p> <p><u>Monday</u> Acts 21:8-14 John 14:27-15:7</p>
<i>For Those Who Are Sick And Home-bound</i>		
<p>Virginia, Denise, Olvian, Marie, James, Alexandra, Andrew, Christina, Louise, Porter, Alvin, Tracy, Kathy, Andrew, Maria, Helen, John, Tom, Nina, Sophia, Jim, Spresha, Kristin, Niko, Spiro, Angjeliki, Melod, Olgay, Ruth, Fr. Milorad, Naomi, Terry, Naomi, Annette, Tatiana, Aleena, Lester Jr., Natalia, Otari, Lasha</p>	<p>Seven-Day Vigil Candles are used for the Eternal Light that hangs above the Royal Doors and are often placed in front of the icons of Christ or the Birth-giver of God. If you would like to donate a Seven-Day Vigil Candle, Please include the name or names of those for whom the candle is donated, and we will place them in this section for special prayers.</p>	<p><u>Tuesday</u> Acts 21:26-32 John 16:2-13</p> <p><u>Wednesday</u> Acts 23:1-11 John 16:15-23</p>
<i>Prayers In General</i>		
<p>Fr. Dennis and his family, Fr. Ioan, Christian, Michael, Erica, Kaida, DuDash family, Michael, Robert, Ally, Steve, Jake and Amanda and their children, Katherine, Ron, Anthony, Volodymyr, Nick, Sophia, Michael, Rafael, Bob, Barbara, Juliya and the child born of her, Ansley and the child to be born of her, Sandra, Enoch, John, Victoria, Melenie, Grace, Michael, Barbara, Giorgi, Molly, Jim, Chloe</p>		<p><u>Thursday</u> Acts 25:13-19 John 16:23-33</p> <p><u>Friday</u> Acts 27:1-44 John 17:18-26</p>
<p><i>[To be inserted after the petition for the living]</i> Again we pray for mercy, life, peace, health, salvation, for those who are suffering, wounded, grieving, or displaced because of the war in Ukraine.</p>	<b>COFFEE HOUR</b>	<p><u>Saturday</u> Acts 28:1-31 John 21:15-25</p>
<p><i>[Petitions at Augmented Litany]</i> Again we pray for a cessation of the hostilities against Ukraine, and that reconciliation and peace will flourish there, we pray thee, hearken and have mercy.</p>	<p><b><u>May</u></b> 28 – Pat Lane</p>	
<p>We give thanks to You, O Lord our God, Who in Your mercy and providential care, has called forth Archimandrite NIKODHIM to become a shepherd of wisdom and strength for our Albanian Archdiocese. We ask that You Bless Father NIKODHIM as he readies himself to become our future archpastor so he may:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• care for our spiritual well-being,</li> <li>• unite us in a zealous confession of our holy faith,</li> <li>• commit us in loving service to one another in bright witness to the glory of Your holy Name.</li> </ul> <p>Hear us and have mercy.</p>	<p><b><u>June</u></b> 04 11 – Dellermann Family 18 25</p> <p>Coffee Hour is a wonderful chance for us to get together to break bread and spend time with each other, to celebrate those whom we have held memorials for, and to come together as the family of God outside of worship. To sign up, to host a coffee hour, contact Fr. Nicholas or Donna Bacon.</p>	<p><b><u>Reading the Bible in a Year</u></b></p> <p>May 28: Psalms 117-120 May 29: Psalms 121-124 May 30: Psalms 125-128 May 31: Psalms 129-132 June 01: Psalms 133-136 June 02: Psalms 137-140 June 03: Psalms 141-144</p>



## The Ascension Reveals Our True Purpose

May 25, 2023 · Fr. Barnabas Powell

Christ is Ascended!

There was an article recently in the Wall Street Journal talking about the noticeable increase in the amount of Americans converting to Orthodoxy. And one of the more amazing discoveries is that these converts are embracing the Orthodox Faith in spite of having no cultural connection to traditional Orthodox cultures. And, a sizable amount of these converts are young men.

Why is this happening, the reporter asked me when he spoke to me. I gave him a simple answer: purpose.

The reality is that, especially among young men in this society, there is a sense of purposelessness. And that leads to some pretty unhealthy masculine behaviors. There has been a ton written on the “re-enchantment” of the modern world, and how we all crave a meaningful life that has a sense of adventure and quest. But this is especially true for men. And when this is missing or, worse yet, this desire is called “toxic masculinity” young men suffer from anger and they don’t know what to do with that. It comes out in broken ways and does great harm. This lack of purpose also affects women and all of society. When you don’t know who you are and what you’re meant to become, you start looking in all the wrong places for answers.

But what if there were a clear message from God Himself as to our purpose and destiny? What if I told you there was a clear and unambiguous message we could offer confused humanity that would each person to discover just who and what they were created to be?

Look at our lesson today in Acts 1:1-12:

*IN THE FIRST BOOK, O Theophilos, I have dealt with all that Jesus began to do and teach, until the day when he was taken up, after he had given commandment through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom he had chosen. To them he presented himself alive after his passion by many proofs, appearing to them during forty days, and speaking of the kingdom of God. And while staying with them he charged them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which, he said, “you heard from me, for John baptized with water, but before many days you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit.” So when they had come together, they asked him, “Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom of Israel?” He said to them, “it is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has fixed by his own authority. But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth.” And when he had said this, as they were looking on, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight. And while they were gazing into heaven as he went, behold, two men stood by them in white robes, and said, “Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven.” Then they returned from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a sabbath day’s journey away.*

St. Luke follows up his written Gospel with the Acts of the Apostles and he addresses this book to the same addressee as his Gospel book: Theophilos. The name literally means “the friend of God.” Scholars dispute whether this “Theophilos” was a real person or just meant to be addressed to anyone who desires to be God’s friend. Regardless, the beginning of Acts reveals some powerful wisdom from the Lord on the Day of His Ascension to the “right hand of the Father.”

The disciples are still a bit shell-shocked by the past 40 days of visiting with the Risen Lord and learning from Him all the scriptures reveal about Him and the Kingdom of God. And yet, they are still convinced Jesus’ ministry is to kick out the Romans and make Israel “great again.” They are hung up on this political vision of the Messiah and they ask the Lord “Is this the time to restore the kingdom of Israel?”

Wow, are you serious, fellas? Are y’all still hung up on that? Hey, don’t be too hard on them. We still get captured by politics to this day! Hey, don’t be too hard on them. We would have probably been just as clueless before the Spirit came and brought us “all truth.”

But notice, the Lord doesn’t correct them! I would have, but Jesus doesn’t. He redirects these shell-shocked

disciples toward their ultimate purpose: to be martyrs (witnesses) for the Faith.

And while the word “martyr” has taken on a notion of dying for your beliefs, that isn’t the main message of the word itself. No, a martyr for the Faith is a witness for the Faith. Now, to be sure, there are many times in history, and for all but one of the Apostles, where dying for the Faith was the ultimate witness for the Faith. And all of us are called to be witnesses of the faith. And we are. The only issue to be settled is whether we are a good witness or a bad witness, for we certainly are witnesses! This purpose, this call to be a faithful witness of the Resurrected Lord in our behaviors, choices, and priorities all flow from the miraculous Ascension of the Lord into heaven.

He doesn’t just disappear from them. He rises slowly through the air as an open spectacle of His victory over death and corruption. He takes His glorified, human body into heaven revealing the destiny of our human lives

as well as we are connected to Him in His Church, the Body of Christ. He reveals what all of us are destined to have: Life with Him. And this ultimate purpose, this ultimate destiny fills our “right now” lives with meaning and adventure as we cooperate with His Holy Spirit for the absolutely engaging adventure of taming our passions, maturing our desires, and becoming “by grace what Christ is by nature.” Wow! What a purpose! What a destiny! And it’s available to each of us every day!

And notice where the Lord promises His disciples would be witnesses – In Jerusalem, in Judea, in Samaria, and in the whole world. No wonder the Lord told them to wait 10 more days for Pentecost when the Holy Spirit would come and give them the power to accomplish this eternal task of being a witness for Christ. Anyone truly living this adventure and purposeful life of a faithful follower of Jesus Christ can’t help but be noticed in this dark and confused world. But our witness won’t just be limited to our home town. Living this Faith will ripple through the whole world! This is the adventure Christ invites you to take.

So, today, as we watch as the Lord ascends into heaven to sit at the right hand of the Father and witness that this is the purpose and destiny for all those who love Him, let us love others enough to be good witnesses of this Faith by living a Normal Orthodox Life!

### **Prayer for the Week**

**O Christ our God, upon fulfilling Your dispensation for our sake, You ascended in Glory, uniting the earthly with the heavenly. You were never separate but remained inseparable, and cried out to those who love You, “I am with you and no one is against you.”**



## May Events

### May

28 – 10:00am Divine Liturgy  
Education Sunday  
29 – 10:00am Blessing of the Graves  
(Fernwood)  
31 – 7:15pm Bible Study via GoogleMeets

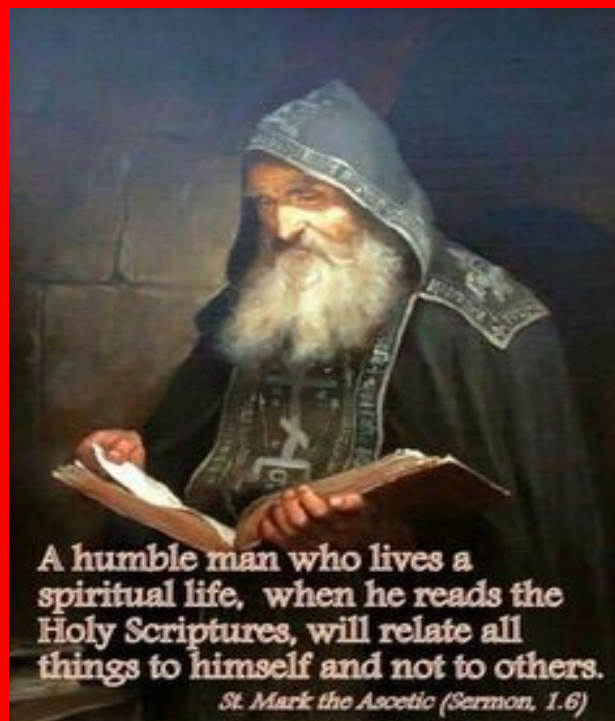
### June

02 – 6:00pm Fun Night  
04 – 10:00am Divine Liturgy  
*Feast of Pentecost*  
07 – 7:15pm Bible Study via GoogleMeets  
11 – 10:00am Divine Liturgy  
14 – 7:15pm Bible Study via GoogleMeets  
18 – 10:00am Divine Liturgy  
21 – 7:15pm Bible Study via GoogleMeets

#### Can't join us in person?

We stream our services on our YouTube Channel:

[https://www.youtube.com/@sspeterpaulortho  
doxchurcho1810](https://www.youtube.com/@sspeterpaulortho<br/>doxchurcho1810)



## Falling Between the Cracks

May 26, 2023 · Fr. Stephen Freeman

... human nature is created and so, is unavoidably mortal; with death man's entire psychosomatic being comes to an end. All of his psychological and mental functions cease to function: his self-consciousness, reasoning, judgment, memory, imagination, and desire. Man is no longer able to function through the parts of the body in order to speak, to call to memory, to distinguish, to desire, to reason, to be impassioned, and to see" St. Anastasios of Sinai (*Odigos*, Migne P.G. 89, 36).

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The first time I read the words of St. Anastasios, I felt like my life was falling between the cracks. To think of my self-consciousness, reasoning, judgment, memory, imagination, desire, etc., ceasing to function seemed pretty much like the end of existence. If I were to lack such things what or who would I be? Doesn't the immortality of the soul promise the continuation of such things?

Time passes and many things begin to happen within self-awareness. I can begin to see that my memory is not so reliable. I understand that I remember the big things, and I'm not concerned with the small things – that I can't remember why I originally came into a room doesn't disturb me. What disturbs me comes more commonly from what I do remember. I like to tell stories. The point of an event has often seemed more important than the event itself. But careful reflection reveals to me that sometimes the stories are not quite accurate – and for the life of me – I cannot really tell whether the story that I remember and the event which occasioned it are the same thing. Worse still, I cannot recall the differences.

And what of desire and thought? They change from moment to moment. The desires that I carried to bed are never the ones with which I wake. Where is the center of the self? And what of eternal life?

*But someone will say, "How are the dead raised up? And with what body do they come?" Foolish one, what you sow is not made alive unless it dies. And what you sow, you do not sow that body that shall be, but mere grain— perhaps wheat or some other grain. But God gives it a body as He pleases, and to each*



*seed its own body. (1Co 15:35-38)*

There is a drive to distance ourselves from the body – for we recognize that the body’s dissolution in the earth will betray us. It will cease to be “me,” and become some other dust. And so we put our hope in the soul, though we cannot fathom what we mean. But it lingers as a repository for the future, the guarantee of my continued existence.

Of course, I am troubled when I watch the occasional dissolution of the brain in this life – a friend who has suffered a stroke – a family member with dementia – and I see that a small insult to the brain removes almost everything I imagined to be the person. So what is the job of the soul and how does it relate to the frailty of my flesh?

Apparently what I really want is something to which I can point and proclaim that its survival guarantees my survival. Some speak of the soul and its immortality in a manner that makes our identity itself inherently immortal. But though the Church teaches that the soul is immortal – it does not teach that the soul is immortal by nature. Like all that is not God, the soul is a created thing. As created, it comes from nothing. Its nature would be – nothing.

The answer to these perplexing questions can be found only in God.

*If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory. (Col 3:1-5)*

Apparently, I am already dead. Thus I am concerning myself with the wrong thing. If, in Christ, I am already dead, then what and who is my life that is now “hidden with Christ in God?”

I stand in a strange position. The identity I know, the memories I wish to retain, my self-consciousness, reasoning, judgment, imagination and desires, apparently belong to a dead man, while there is a stranger bearing my name whose life is hidden with Christ in God.

The Cross is the destruction of the ego. The memories, an edited selection of events assembled to tell a “story of me,” are apparently insufficient for the construction of a life. At present they construct a simulacrum, an inferior and insubstantial version of the real thing. The same is true of the desires and imaginations, the faulty reasoning and mis-judgments. They are not the treasures of an identity to be preserved at all cost. It is not the disappearance of these ephemera that will be marked by a tombstone. They were only feeble noises and sterile protests that longed for true existence. That ego wanted to belong, to be loved. It judged itself as wrongly as it judged others. It imagined injuries where none existed and desired lives that were never to be. The truth, were I to admit it, is that I would not want an eternity as such an ego. Just the few short years I have borne with it have been torture enough.

Eternity cannot be anything to be desired if it does not come with freedom. The ephemeral ego is not freedom – it is an impossible past and historical embarrassment.

*Jesus answered them, “Most assuredly, I say to you, whoever commits sin is a slave of sin. And a slave does not abide in the house forever, but a son abides forever. Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed” (Joh 8:34-37).*

But what about me? What will become of me? If the ego is lost what is saved? Who is this new life?

*To him who overcomes I will give some of the hidden manna to eat. And I will give him a white stone, and on the stone a new name written which no one knows except him who receives it. (Rev 2:17)*

*If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God... (Col. 3:1).*

*For whoever desires to save his life (τὴν ψυχὴν = soul) will lose it, but whoever loses his life (τὴν ψυχὴν=soul) for My sake will save it. (Luke 9:24)*

The hidden stone is the great treasure buried in a field, the which, if a man finds, he sells everything he has and buys it. So why do we labor for that which is perishing?

*Addendum: The orientation of our life towards the past – the remembered self – is a sort of anxiety – a fear of death itself. The truth of our existence would seem to be in something that is yet to come – something towards which we are moving. Heaven is not the recovery of the past but “behold I make all things new.” It is rushing to meet us.*

<https://blogs.ancientfaith.com/glory2godforallthings/2023/05/26/falling-between-the-cracks-2/>

