

Saints Peter and Paul Orthodox Church

Albanian Archdiocese - OCA

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Rev. Nicholas Dellermann – Rector (860-861-7468)

SUNDAY, JUNE 25

3rd Sunday after Pentecost

Afterfeast of the Nativity of the Forerunner, Virgin-Martyr Febronia of Nisibis

**Tone 2
Troparion
(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!"

**Tone 4
Troparion
(Forerunner)**

O Prophet and Forerunner of the coming of Christ, although we cannot praise thee worthily, we honor thee in love at thy nativity, for by it thou hast ended thy father's silence and thy mother's barrenness, proclaiming to the world the incarnation of the Son of God!

**Tone 4
Troparion
(St. Febronia)**

Thy lamb Febronia calls out to Thee, O Jesus, in a loud voice: "I love Thee, my Bridegroom, and in seeking Thee, I endure suffering. In baptism I was crucified so that I might reign in Thee, and I died so that I might live with Thee. Accept me as a pure sacrifice, for I have offered myself in love." Through her prayers save our souls, since Thou art merciful!

**Tone 2
Kontakion
(Resurrection)**

Hell became afraid, O almighty Savior, seeing the miracle of Thy Resurrection from the tomb! The dead arose! Creation, with Adam, beheld this and rejoiced with Thee, and the world, my Savior, praises Thee forever.

**Tone 3
Kontakion
(Forerunner)**

Today the formerly barren woman gives birth to Christ's Forerunner, who is the fulfillment of every prophecy; for in the Jordan, when he laid his hand on the One foretold by the Prophets, he was revealed as Prophet, Herald, and Forerunner of God the Word.



Tone 6
Kontakion
(St. Febronia)

*“Most sweet Jesus, my Bridegroom,
it is not hard for me to follow Thee,” cried Febronia,
“the sweetness of Thy love gives wings of hope to my soul,
the beauty of Thy mercy has sweetened my heart;
may I drain the cup of sufferings in imitation of Thee,
so that Thou mayest count me worthy to be among the wise virgins: those who dance with Thee in Thy
bridal chamber.”*

*Therefore, venerable passion-bearer, as we honor the struggles of thy labors, we entreat thee:
“Pray that we not find the doors of the bridal chamber locked to us!”*

❧ **Prokeimenon** ❧

Tone 1 (Resurrection)

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

V. Rejoice in the Lord, O you righteous! Praise befits the just! (Ps. 32:1)

Tone 7 (All Saints of America)

Precious in the sight of the Lord / is the death of His saints. (Ps. 115:6)

The Holy Glorious and All-Praised Leaders of the Apostles, Peter and Paul

Commemorated on June 29

Sermon of Saint Augustine, Bishop of Hippo

Today the Holy Church piously remembers the sufferings of the Holy Glorious and All-Praised Apostles Peter and Paul.

Saint Peter, the fervent follower of Jesus Christ, for the profound confession of His Divinity: “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God,” was deemed worthy by the Savior to hear in answer, “Blessed art thou, Simon ... I tell thee, that thou art Peter [Petrus], and on this stone [petra] I build My Church” (Mt.16:16-18). On “this stone” [petra], is on that which thou sayest: “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God” it is on this thy confession I build My Church. Wherefore the “thou art Peter”: it is from the “stone” [petra] that Peter [Petrus] is, and not from Peter [Petrus] that the “stone” [petra] is, just as the Christian is from Christ, and not Christ from the Christian. Do you want to know, from what sort of “rock” [petra] the Apostle Peter [Petrus] was named? Hear the Apostle Paul: “Brethren, I do not want ye to be ignorant,” says the Apostle of Christ, “how all our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; and all were baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea; and did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ” (1 Cor.10: 1-4)....

Our Lord Jesus Christ, in the final days of His earthly life, in the days of His mission to the race of man, chose from among the disciples His twelve Apostles to preach the Word of God. Among them, the Apostle Peter for his fiery ardor was vouchsafed to occupy the first place (Mt.10:2) and to be as it were the representative person for all the Church. Therefore it is said to him, preferentially, after the confession: “I will give unto thee the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth, shall be bound in the heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth: shall be



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✠ The Epistle Reading ✠

Romans 5:1-10

Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance, character; and character, hope. Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us. For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.

Romanëve 5:1-10

Si u drejtësuam pra prej besimi, kemi paqe me Perëndinë me anë të Zotit tonë Jisu Krisht, prej të cilit kemi edhe hyrjen me anë të besimit në këtë hir, në të cilin qëndrojmë; edhe mburremi në shpresën e lavdisë së Perëndisë. Edhe jo vetëm kjo, po edhe mburremi për shtrëngimet, duke ditur se shtrëngimi sjell durim, edhe durimi provë, edhe prova shpresë. Edhe shpresa nuk turpëron, sepse dashuria e Perëndisë është derdhur në zemrat tona me anë të Frymës së Shenjtë që na është dhënë. Sepse kur ishim ne ende të sëmurë, Krishti vdiq në kohën e caktuar për të pabesët. Sepse vështirë edhe për një njeri të drejtë dikush do të vdesë; sepse për të mirin mbase edhe guxon ndonjë të vdesë. Po Perëndia tregon dashurinë e tij për ne, sepse ndërsa ne ishim ende mëkatarë, Krishti vdiq për ne. Shumë më tepër pra, si dolëm të drejtë tani me anë të gjakut të tij, do të shpëtojmë nga zemërimi me anë të tij. Sepse, në qoftë se kur ishim armiq u pajtuam me Perëndinë me anë të vdekjes së Birit të tij, shumë më tepër pasi u pajtuam do të shpëtojmë me anë të jetës së tij.

К Римлянам 5:1-10

Итак, оправдавшись верою, мы имеем мир с Богом через Господа нашего Иисуса Христа, через Которого верою и получили мы доступ к той благодати, в которой стоим и хвалимся надеждою славы Божией. И не сим только, но хвалимся и скорбями, зная, что от скорби происходит терпение, от терпения опытность, от опытности надежда, а надежда не постыжает, потому что любовь Божия излилась в сердца наши Духом Святым, данным нам. Ибо Христос, когда еще мы были немощны, в определенное время умер за нечестивых. Ибо едва ли кто умрет за праведника; разве за благодетеля, может быть, кто и решится умереть. Но Бог Свою любовь к нам доказывает тем, что Христос умер за нас, когда мы были еще грешниками. Посему тем более ныне, будучи оправданы Кровию Его, спасемся Им от гнева. Ибо если, будучи врагами, мы примирились с Богом смертью Сына Его, то тем более, помирившись, спасемся жизнью Его.

Tone 2

Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia!

V. May the Lord hear thee in the day of trouble! May the name of the God of Jacob protect thee! *(Ps. 19:1)*

V. Save the King, O Lord, and hear us on the day we call! *(Ps. 19:9)*

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loosed in heaven" (Mt.16: 19). Therefore it was not one man, but rather the One Universal Church, that received these "keys" and the right "to bind and loosen." And that it was actually the Church that received this right, and not exclusively a single person, turn your attention to another place of the Scriptures, where the same Lord says to all His Apostles, "Receive ye the Holy Spirit" and further after this, "Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them: and whose soever sins ye retain, are retained" (John 20: 22-23); or: "whatsoever ye bind upon the earth, shall be bound in Heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth, shall be loosened in heaven" (Mt.18:18). Thus, it is the Church that binds, the Church that loosens; the Church, built upon the foundational cornerstone, Jesus Christ Himself (Eph 2:20), doth bind and loosen. Let both the binding and the loosening be feared: the loosening, in order not to fall under this again; the binding, in order not to remain forever in this condition. Therefore

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✧ The Gospel Reading ✧

Matthew 6:22-33

The lamp of the body is the eye. If therefore your eye is good, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in you is darkness, how great is that darkness! No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon. Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? Which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature? So why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; and yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Now if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will He not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.

Mattheut 6:22-33

Kandili i trupit është syri. Në qoftë pra se syri yt është i kthjellët, gjithë trupi yt do të jetë i ndritshëm. Po në qoftë se syri yt është i lig, gjithë trupi yt do të jetë i errët. Në qoftë pra se drita që gjendet tek ti është errësirë, sa e madhe do të jetë errësira? Asnjë s'mund t'u shërbejë dy zotërinjve, sepse ose njërin do ta urrejë, edhe tjetrin do ta dojë; ose njërit do t'i ngjitet prapa, edhe tjetrit do t'i kthejë krahët. Nuk mund t'i shërbeni Perëndisë dhe Mamonait. Prandaj po ju them juve: Mos u shqetësoni për jetën tuaj, ç'të hani edhe ç'të pini; as për trupin tuaj ç'të vishni. A nuk është jeta më e vlefshme se ushqimi, edhe trupi se të veshurit? Vështroni shpendët e qiellit, se nuk mbjellin as nuk korrin, as nuk mbledhin në grunarë, edhe Ati juaj qiellor i ushqen. A nuk ndryshoni ju më tepër se ata? Po cili nga ju duke u shqetësuar mund të shtojë një kut në shtatin e tij? Edhe pse shqetësoheni për veshjen? Vështroni zambakët e arës, si rriten; as mundohen, as endin. Po ju them juve, se as Solomoni me gjithë lavdinë e tij nuk qe veshur ashtu si një nga këto. Po në qoftë se barin e arës, që sot është e nesër hidhet në furrë, Perëndia e vesh kështu, a nuk do t'ju veshë ju shumë më tepër, o besëpakë? Po mos u shqetësoni pra duke thënë: ç'të hamë a ç'të pimë a ç'të veshim? Sepse gjithë këto i kërkojnë me ngulm kombet; sepse Ati juaj qiellor e di se keni nevojë për gjithë këto. Po kërkonit së pari mbretërinë e Perëndisë, dhe drejtësinë e tij; dhe këto të gjitha do t'ju shtohen juve.

От Матфея 6:22-33

Светильник для тела есть око. Итак, если око твое будет чисто, то всё тело твое будет светло; если же око твое будет худо, то всё тело твое будет темно. Итак, если свет, который в тебе, тьма, то какова же тьма? Никто не может служить двум господам: ибо или одного будет ненавидеть, а другого любить; или одному станет усердствовать, а о другом нерадеть. Не можете служить Богу и маммоне. Посему говорю вам: не заботьтесь для души вашей, что вам есть и что пить, ни для тела вашего, во что одеться. Душа не больше ли пищи, и тело одежды? Взгляните на птиц небесных: они ни сеют, ни жнут, ни собирают в житницы; и Отец ваш Небесный питает их. Вы не гораздо ли лучше их? Да и кто из вас, заботясь, может прибавить себе росту [хотя] на один локоть? И об одежде что заботитесь? Посмотрите на полевые лилии, как они растут: ни трудятся, ни прядут; но говорю вам, что и Соломон во всей славе своей не одевался так, как всякая из них; если же траву полевую, которая сегодня есть, а завтра будет брошена в печь, Бог так одевает, кольми паче вас, малoverы! Итак не заботьтесь и не говорите: что нам есть? или что пить? или во что одеться? потому что всего этого ищут язычники, и потому что Отец ваш Небесный знает, что вы имеете нужду во всем этом. Ищите же прежде Царства Божия и правды Его, и это все приложится вам.



Communion Hymn

Praise the Lord from the heavens, praise Him in the highest! (*Ps. 148:1*)
The righteous shall be in everlasting remembrance! He shall not fear evil tidings! (*Ps. 111:6*)
Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia!

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"Iniquities ensnare a man, and everyone is bound in the chains of his own sins," says Wisdom (Prov 5:22); and except for Holy Church nowhere is it possible to receive the loosening. After His Resurrection the Lord entrusted the Apostle Peter to shepherd His spiritual flock not because, that among the disciples only Peter alone was pre-deserved to shepherd the flock of Christ, but Christ addresses Himself chiefly to Peter because, that Peter was first among the Apostles and as such the representative of the Church; besides which, having turned in this instance to Peter alone, as to the top Apostle, Christ by this confirms the unity of the Church. "Simon of John" -- says the Lord to Peter -- "lovest thou Me?" -- and the Apostle answered: "Yea, Lord, Thou knowest that I love Thee"; and a second time it was thus asked, and a second time he thus answered; being asked a third time, seeing that as it were not believed, he was saddened. But how is it possible for him not to believe That One, Who knew his heart? And wherefore then Peter answered: "Lord, Thou knowest all; Thou knowest that I love Thee." "And sayeth Jesus to him" all three times "Feed My sheep" (John 20:15-17).

Besides this, the triple appealing of the Savior to Peter and the triple confession of Peter before the Lord had a particular beneficial purpose for the Apostle. That one, to whom was given "the keys of the kingdom" and the right "to bind and to loose," bound himself thrice by fear and cowardice (Mt.26:69-75), and the Lord thrice loosens him by His appeal and in turn by his confession of strong love. And to shepherd literally the flock of Christ was acquired by all the Apostles and their successors. "Take heed, therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock," the Apostle Paul urges church presbyters, "over which the Holy Spirit hath made you overseers, to feed the Church of God, which He hath purchased with His own blood" (Acts 20:28); and the Apostle Peter to the elders: "Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof not by constraint, but willingly: not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind: neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being examples to the flock. And when is appeared the Prince of pastors, ye will receive unfading crowns of glory" (1 Pet. 5:2-4).

It is remarkable that Christ, having said to Peter: "Feed My sheep," did not say: "Feed thy sheep," but rather to feed, good servant, the sheep of the Lord. "Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?" (1 Cor.1:13). "Feed My sheep". Wherefore "wolfish robbers, wolfish oppressors, deceitful teachers and mercenaries, not being concerned about the flock" (Mt.7:15; Acts 20:29; 2 Pet 2:1; John 10:12), having plundered a strange flock and making of the spoils as though it be of their own particular gain, they think that they feed their flock. Such are not good pastors, as pastors of the Lord. "The good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep" (John 10:11), entrusted to Him by the chief Shepherd Himself (1 Pet 5:4). And the Apostle Peter, true to his calling, gave his soul for the very flock of Christ, having sealed his apostleship by a martyr's death, is now glorified throughout all the world.

The Apostle Paul, formerly Saul, was changed from a robbing wolf into a meek lamb. Formerly he was an enemy of the Church, then is manifest as an Apostle. Formerly he stalked it, then preached it. Having received from the high priests the authority at large to throw all Christians in chains for execution, he was already on the way, he breathed out "threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord" (Acts 9:1), he thirsted for blood, but "He that dwells in the Heavens shall laugh him to scorn" (Ps 2:4). When he, "having persecuted and vexed" in such manner "the Church of God" (1Cor.15:9; Acts 8:5), he came near Damascus, and the Lord from Heaven called to him: "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me?" and I am here, and I am there, I am everywhere: here is My head; there is My body. There becomes nothing of a surprise in this; we ourselves are members of the Body of Christ. "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me; it is hard for thee to kick against the goad" (Acts 9:4-5). Saul, however, "trembling and frightened", cried out: "Who art Thou, Lord?" The Lord answered him, "I am Jesus Whom thou persecutest."

And Saul suddenly undergoes a change: "What wantest Thou me to do?" -- he cries out. And suddenly for him there is the Voice: "Arise, and go to the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do" (Acts 9:6). Here the Lord sends Ananias: "Arise and go into the street" to a man, "by the name of Saul," and baptize him, "for this one is a chosen vessel unto Me, to bear My name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel" (Acts 9: 11, 15, 18). This vessel must be filled with My Grace. "Ananias, however, answered: Lord, I have heard from many about

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PRAYERS	Birthdays, Names-days, & Anniversaries	SCRIPTURE THIS WEEK
<p style="text-align: center;"><i>For Those Who Have Fallen Asleep</i></p>		
<p>Newly Departed Thomas, Newly Departed Nikoli, Newly Departed Sue, Newly Departed child Luke,</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>June 11 – June 17 Leon Sudakevich (B) Isabelle McGinley (B) Donna Lane (B)</p> <p><u>Seven-Day Vigil Candles</u></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>Church Lectionary</u></p> <p><i>Today</i> Romans 5:1-10 Matthew 6:22-33</p> <p><i>Monday</i> Romans 9:18-33 Matthew 11:2-15</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><i>For Those Who Are Sick And Home-bound</i></p>		
<p>Virginia, Denise, Olvian, Marie, James, Alexandra, Andrew, Christina, Louise, Porter, Alvin, Tracy, Kathy, Andrew, Maria, Helen, John, Nina, Sophia, Jim, Spresha, Kristin, Niko, Spiro, Angeliki, Melod, Olgay, Ruth, Fr. Jerry, Naomi, Terry, Naomi, Annette, Tatiana, Aleena, Lester Jr., Natalia, Otari, Lasha</p>		<p><i>Tuesday</i> Romans 10:11-11:2 Matthew 11:16-20</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Prayers In General</i></p>		
<p>The community of Ss. Peter & Paul Miami, 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, Ansley and the child to be born of her, Sandra, Enoch, John, Victoria, Melenie, Grace, Michael, Barbara, Giorgi, Molly, Jim, Chloe,</p>		<p><i>Wednesday</i> Romans 11:2-12 Matthew 11:20-26</p> <p><i>Thursday</i> 2 Corinthians 11:21-12:9 Matthew 16:13-19 Romans 11:13-24 Matthew 11:27-30</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><i>[To be inserted after the petition for the living]</i></p>		
<p>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>		<p><i>Friday</i> 1 Corinthians 4:9-16 Mark 3:13-19 Romans 11:25-36 Matthew 12:1-8</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><i>[Petitions at Augmented Litany]</i></p>		
<p>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><i>Saturday</i> Romans 6:11-17 Matthew 8:14-23</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"> • care for our spiritual well-being, • unite us in a zealous confession of our holy faith, • commit us in loving service to one another in bright witness to the glory of Your holy Name. <p>Hear us and have mercy.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">COFFEE HOUR</p> <p>June 25 – Hot Dog Sunday</p> <p>July 02 – Patronal Feast! 09 16 23 30</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><u>Reading the Bible in a Year</u></p> <p>June 25: Isaiah 15-28 June 26: Isaiah 29-32 June 27: Isaiah 33-36 June 28: Isaiah 37-40 June 29: Isaiah 41-44 June 30: Isaiah 45-48 July 01: Isaiah 49-52</p>

More Valuable Than Many Sparrows

June 22, 2023 · Fr. Barnabas Powell



The gradual shift in modern educational philosophy to a “self-esteem” emphasis is complete. From the math standards that discourage teachers from “correcting” incorrect answers to the ball fields where “we don’t keep score” so no one “feels” bad, this shift is now producing consequences of its own. In fact, some have come to call the modern generation the “snowflake” generation because these young people have all been told they are just like a “snowflake.” Each one is different from the other, and it looks like just as delicate!

To be sure, this shift in philosophy is motivated by the best intentions, but, as in many human endeavors, those unintended consequences usually “surprise” all of us. While attempting to “correct” what we see as a flaw, we make matters worse by creating even more problems in our constant social experimentation. The problem is the real consequences show up in real people’s lives. And then it shapes the entire society and enshrines these spiritual and emotional poverties as virtues!

When ideologies shape society disconnected from timeless wisdom, even the best intentions cannot protect us from disastrous consequences.

No wonder we humans always tend to be our own worst enemies, and no wonder the message of Christ is such a radical message for this upside-down world of ours.

Just look at today’s Gospel Lesson in Matthew 10:23-31:

The Lord said to his disciples, “When they persecute you in one town, flee to the next; for truly, I say to you, you will not have gone through all the towns of Israel before the Son of man comes. A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master; it is enough for the disciple to be like his teacher, and the servant like his master. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebul, how much more will they malign those of his household. So have no fear of them; for nothing is covered that will not be revealed, or hidden that will not be known. What I tell you in the dark, utter in the light; and what you hear whispered, proclaim upon the housetops. And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul; rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in Gehenna. Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? And not one of them will fall to the ground without your Father’s will. But even the hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not, therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows.”

Talk about the true source of healthy self-esteem! You ARE more valuable than sparrows! Why sparrows? Well, because sparrows are small and common, and God, in His love for His creation knows each sparrow and cares for them. So, if God knows and cares for the smallest of birds, then you being more valuable than sparrows means you are even more treasured and loved by God!

He has just told His disciples to go everywhere spreading His message and He has told them they would be persecuted and driven from town to town. The disciples are to be like their Master and see all this rejection of the message of Christ as the reality of the spiritual poverty in the world. But all this opposition isn’t meant to discourage or dissuade them. It isn’t meant to crush their “self-esteem!”

After all, we should not fear them that can merely kill the body! Doesn’t our Creed declare the resurrection of the dead? Isn’t the central message of our faith the destruction of death by death? So, if

death is defeated then that threat doesn't hold us in fear any longer! Our greatest threat to our genuine self-esteem comes from that which deludes us into remaining a slave to the fear of death. That is what destroys the soul!

And that is what steals our true self-worth from us! Your Father sees every sparrow that falls to the ground, and you are worth more than many sparrows. In fact, even the hairs of your head are numbered by the Lord Who KNOWS you, and this is where your real self-worth lies; in your intimate connection with your Lord. If you forget Him, you end up losing yourself!

St. Eusebius of Samosota was a hero of the Orthodox Faith during the 4th century. This man's piety and virtue were acknowledged even by his enemies, the Arians. The Church was suffering mightily during this period from the Arian heresy that said Jesus was merely a created being and not equal with the Father. This damnable heresy was opposed by the Orthodox and Eusebius was a mighty champion defending the Orthodox Faith from this heresy. He understood the consequences of this theological error in real life. He knew that if the Arians won the day that real people would never know their true selves and their true worth because of this horrible doctrine of the Arians. He understood that the authentic teaching of the Apostles that Jesus was both fully God and fully man was key to the Christian message because it powerfully revealed that God loved His creation so much He came to save us Himself. That's how much God loves you. Eusebius was at a ripe, old age when he was going to a village to install their new bishop and while he was walking to the church, a woman who held to Arianism, threw a clay roofing tile from her upper apartment and struck the saint on the head. As he lay dying in the street, he made everyone attending to him promise the woman would not be charged or harmed. He went to the Lord around 380 AD.

Today, no amount of "self-esteem" support based on making you "feel" better about yourself will ever overcome the tug of the slavery of death in this world. It simply isn't strong enough to overcome the real soul sickness we all suffer from. No, my dearest, your real self-esteem will always be found in a relationship with God. How can it be anywhere else since you were created in His image? All the shallow "science" of "self-esteem" in this world will only reinforce the sick narcissism of silly immaturity. Only the esteem that flows from Him Who is Love Himself will ever set you truly free to be who you really are! That is where your best and most purposeful work needs to be! That's where you will discover your true uniqueness and your real self! That knowledge flows from being Orthodox on Purpose!

Prayer for the Week

As a sharer of the ways and a successor to the throne of the Apostles, O inspired of God, you found discipline to be a means of ascent to divine vision. Wherefore, having rightly divided the word of truth, you also contested for the Faith even unto blood, O Hieromartyr Eusebius. Intercede with Christ our God that our souls be saved.

<https://blogs.ancientfaith.com/faithencouraged/2023/06/more-valuable-than-many-sparrows/>

If a man has a friend and he is absolutely certain that his friend loves him, and if that friend does something to cause him suffering and be troublesome to him, he will be convinced that his friend acts out of love and he will never believe that his friend does it to harm him. How much more ought we to be convinced about God who created us, who drew us out of nothingness to existence and life, and who became a man for our sake and died for us, and who does everything out of love for us?

June/July Events

June

25 – 10:00am Divine Liturgy
Education Sunday

28 – 6:30pm Vespers Liturgy
Feast of Ss. Peter and Paul

July

02 – 10:00am Divine Liturgy
Patronal Feast Celebration

05 – 7:15pm Bible Study via GoogleMeets

07 – 6:00pm Fun Night

09 – 10:00am Divine Liturgy

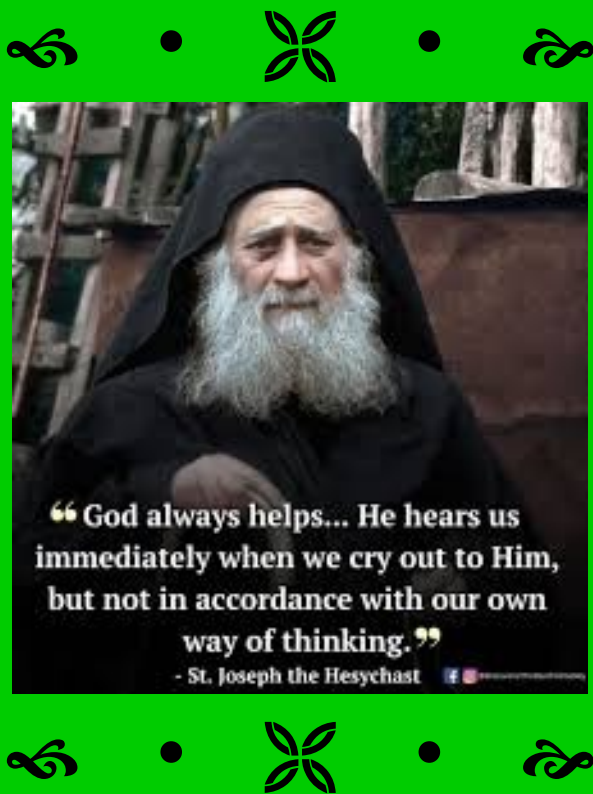
12 – 7:15pm Bible Study via GoogleMeets

16 – 10:00am Divine Liturgy

Can't join us in person?

We stream our services on our YouTube Channel:

<https://www.youtube.com/@sspeterpaulorthodoxhurchoi8io>



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this man, how much evil he hath done to Thy saints in Jerusalem: and here he hath authority from the chief priests to bind all who call on Thy Name” (Acts 9:13-14). But the Lord urgently commands Ananias: “Search for and fetch him, for this vessel is chosen by Me: for I shall show him what great things he must suffer for My name’s sake” (Acts 9:11, 15-16).

And actually the Lord did show the Apostle Paul what things he had to suffer for His Name. He instructed him the deeds; He did not stop at the chains, the fetters, the prisons and shipwrecks; He Himself felt for him in his sufferings, He Himself guided him towards this day. On a single day the memory of the sufferings of both these Apostles is celebrated, though they suffered on separate days, but by the spirit and the closeness of their suffering they constitute one. Peter went first, and Paul followed soon after him. Formerly called Saul, and then Paul, having transformed his pride into humility. His very name (Paulus), meaning “small, little, less,” demonstrates this. What is the Apostle Paul after this? Ask him, and he himself gives answer to this: “I am,” says he, “the least of the Apostles... but I have labored more abundantly than all of them: yet not I, but the grace of God, which was with me” (1 Cor.15:9-10).

And so, brethren, celebrating now the memory of the holy Apostles Peter and Paul, remembering their venerable sufferings, we esteem their true faith and holy life, we esteem the innocence of their sufferings and pure confession. Loving in them the sublime quality and imitating them by great exploits, “in which to be likened to them” (2 Thess 3: 5-9), and we shall attain to that eternal bliss which is prepared for all the saints. The path of our life before was more grievous, thornier, harder, but “we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses” (Heb 12: 1), having passed by along it, made now for us easier, and lighter, and more readily passable. First there passed along it “the author and finisher of our faith,” our Lord Jesus Christ Himself (Heb 12: 2); His daring Apostles followed after Him; then the martyrs, children, women, virgins and a great multitude of witnesses. Who acted in them and helped them on this path? He Who said, “Without Me ye can do nothing” (John 15: 5).

The Christian Life Requires Work And Effort

Every priest can tell you that he's had his share of people who don't think he understands the difficulties they face with their jobs, families, and spouses. Many people think their priest expects too much of them, and they ignore the homilies that challenge them to go deeper into their faith. They drop a check into the collection plate, and head out the door of the church for another round of spiritual nothingness. Yet the scriptures tell us that we must seek first the Kingdom of Heaven. Being successful in business or raising the perfect child are wonderful things, but they should not be on the top of our list. Making more money than your brother-in-law, or having a better house than your neighbors should not be on your list. Working for a good retirement can be a good thing, but not at the expense of your eternal life.

The challenges given to us by the Church's priests are meant to aid us in our quest for the Kingdom of God. And if we are taking our faith seriously we will be grateful for those hard to hear homilies that hit too close to home. We seek out a golf pro in order to improve our swing, and expect him to help us be a better golfer. The trainer in the gym is expected to help us be healthier, and fitter, and our financial adviser is expected to help us make good choices in our investments, yet we ignore the advice of our parish priest, as he attempts to help us gain ground in the spiritual arena.

Our pride can keep us from deepening our spiritual life, if we refuse to seek the guidance of one more experienced in the inner life. If we don't want anyone telling us what to do or pointing out areas of our lives that need change, we can become off kilter, spiritually. The spiritual father gives direction and sets standards that, like the golf pro and weight lifting instructor, are based on experience.

Have your priest recommend some spiritual books that can inspire you to work for perfection in your spiritual life. Ask the proprietor of your parish bookstore to suggest books that would work for you. If you don't have a prayerbook, get one and use it. Create an icon corner or wall for your own personal and family devotions.

Start going to confession on a regular basis. And, whatever you do, don't allow yourself to be late for the services. Arrive from fifteen minutes to a half hour early, so as to properly prepare yourself for the celebration of the Divine Liturgy. Get in the habit of attending Orthros if this service precedes the Sunday Liturgy, or attend the Vesper service, or the All Night Vigil, on Saturday night. Make an effort to immerse yourself in the life of the Church.

Remember, if we let our own ego be our spiritual guide, we will be following the direction of a fool. Living the Christian life takes effort on our part, and with the guidance of someone who really knows us, and is willing to point out where we need to change, we will begin to grow in our faith. The Christian life begins when we decide to think like a Christian, and spiritual maturation comes with work and effort, just as does emotional maturation. Spiritual maturation will fill your life with tranquility, joy and meaningfulness, but you must work for this end.

With love in Christ,
Abbot Tryphon

