

Saints Peter and Paul Orthodox Church

Albanian Archdiocese - OCA

9230 Old Bustleton Avenue

Philadelphia, PA 19115

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

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 5

22nd Sunday after Pentecost

Martyr Galacteon and his wife, Epistemis

**Tone 5
Troparion
(Resurrection)**

*Let us, the faithful, praise and worship the Word,
co-eternal with the Father and the Spirit,
born for our salvation from the Virgin;
for He willed to be lifted up on the Cross in the
flesh,
to endure death,
and to raise the dead
by His glorious Resurrection.*

**Tone 1
Troparion
(Martyrs)**

*Let us the faithful honor these two betrothed
athletes:
Galacteon and modest Epistemis.
Their ascetic labors blossomed into martyrdom,
Therefore we cry to them:
“Glory to Him Who has strengthened you!
Glory to Him Who has crowned you!
Glory to Him Who through you grants healing to all!”*

**Tone 4
Kontakion
(Resurrection)**

*Thou didst descend into hell, O my Savior,
shattering its gates as Almighty,
resurrecting the dead as Creator,
and destroying the sting of death.
Thou hast delivered Adam from the curse, O
Lover of man,
and we cry to Thee: “O Lord, save us!”*

**Tone 2
Kontakion
(Martyrs)**

*You are numbered among the hosts of martyrs
for you were illustrious in mighty contests.
Galacteon, together with Epistemis, thy faithful
wife and companion in struggle,
unceasingly intercede to the one God for us all!*

↻ Prokeimenon ↻

Tone 5 (Resurrection)

Thou, O Lord, shalt protect us / and preserve us from this generation forever. (Ps. 11:7)

V. Save me, O Lord, for there is no longer any that is godly! (Ps. 11:1a)

The Epistle Reading

Galatians 6:11-18

See with what large letters I have written to you with my own hand! As many as desire to make a good showing in the flesh, these would compel you to be circumcised, only that they may not suffer persecution for the cross of Christ. For not even those who are circumcised keep the law, but they desire to have you circumcised that they may boast in your flesh. But God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but a new creation. And as many as walk according to this rule, peace and mercy be upon them, and upon the Israel of God. From now on let no one trouble me, for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus. Brethren, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen.

Galatianeve 6:11-18

Shikoni me çfarë shkronjash të mëdha ju shkrova me dorën time. Sa duan të duken të mirë në mish, këta ju detyrojnë të rrethpriteni, vetëm që të mos përndiqen për kryqin e Krishtit. Sepse as ata që rrethpriten s'e ruajnë ligjin, por duan të rrethpriteni ju, që të mburren në mish tuaj. Por për mua qoftë larg të mburrem, veç për kryqin e Zotit tonë Jisu Krisht, me anë të të cilit bota është kryqëzuar tek unë, edhe unë tek bota. Sepse në Krishtin Jisu as rrethprerja ka fuqi, as parrethprerja, por krijimi i ri. Edhe për të gjithë sa ecin sipas këtij rregulli, paqe e përdëllim qoftë mbi ta, dhe mbi Izraelin e Perëndisë. Tani e tutje askush le të mos më shqetësojë; sepse unë mbaj shenjat e Zotit Jisu në trupin tim. Hiri i Zotit tonë Jisu Krisht qoftë bashkë me frymën tuaj, o vëllezër. Amin.

К Галатам 6:11-18

Видите, как много написал я вам своею рукою. Желющие хвалиться по плоти принуждают вас обрезываться только для того, чтобы не быть гонимыми за крест Христов, ибо и сами обрезывающиеся не соблюдают закона, но хотят, чтобы вы обрезывались, дабы похвалиться в вашей плоти. А я не желаю хвалиться, разве только крестом Господа нашего Иисуса Христа, которым для меня мир распят, и я для мира. Ибо во Христе Иисусе ничего не значит ни обрезание, ни необрезание, а новая тварь. Тем, которые поступают по сему правилу, мир им и милость, и Израилю Божию. Впрочем никто не отягощай меня, ибо я ношу язвы Господа Иисуса на теле моем. Благодать Господа нашего Иисуса Христа со духом вашим, братия. Аминь.

Tone 5

Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia!

V. I will sing of Thy mercies, O Lord, forever; with my mouth I will proclaim Thy truth from generation to generation. *(Ps. 88:1-2)*

V. For Thou hast said: Mercy will be established forever; Thy truth will be prepared in the heavens. *(Ps. 88:3)*

Martyrs Galaction and his wife, Epistemis, at Emesa

There was a rich and distinguished couple named Kletophon and Leukippe, who lived in the Syrian city of Emesa, and for a long time they were childless. They gave much gold to the pagan priests, but still they remained childless. The city of Emesa was governed by a Syrian named Secundus, put there by the Roman Caesars. He was a merciless and zealous persecutor of Christians, and to intimidate them he ordered that the instruments of torture be displayed on the streets. The slightest suspicion of belonging to "the sect of the Galilean" (as thus Christians were called by the pagans), was enough to get a man arrested and handed over for torture. In spite of this, many Christians voluntarily surrendered themselves into the hands of the executioners, in their desire to suffer for Christ.

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✠ The Gospel Reading ✠

Luke 8:41-56

And behold, there came a man named Jairus, and he was a ruler of the synagogue. And he fell down at Jesus' feet and begged Him to come to his house, for he had an only daughter about twelve years of age, and she was dying. But as He went, the multitudes thronged Him. Now a woman, having a flow of blood for twelve years, who had spent all her livelihood on physicians and could not be healed by any, came from behind and touched the border of His garment. And immediately her flow of blood stopped. And Jesus said, "Who touched Me?" When all denied it, Peter and those with him said, "Master, the multitudes throng and press You, and You say, 'Who touched Me?'" But Jesus said, "Somebody touched Me, for I perceived power going out from Me." Now when the woman saw that she was not hidden, she came trembling; and falling down before Him, she declared to Him in the presence of all the people the reason she had touched Him and how she was healed immediately. And He said to her, "Daughter, be of good cheer; your faith has made you well. Go in peace." While He was still speaking, someone came from the ruler of the synagogue's house, saying to him, "Your daughter is dead. Do not trouble the Teacher." But when Jesus heard it, He answered him, saying, "Do not be afraid; only believe, and she will be made well." When He came into the house, He permitted no one to go in except Peter, James, and John, and the father and mother of the girl. Now all wept and mourned for her; but He said, "Do not weep; she is not dead, but sleeping." And they ridiculed Him, knowing that she was dead. But He put them all outside, took her by the hand and called, saying, "Little girl, arise." Then her spirit returned, and she arose immediately. And He commanded that she be given something to eat. And her parents were astonished, but He charged them to tell no one what had happened.

Llukait 8:41-56

Edhe ja tek erdhi një njeri që quhej Jair – dhe ky ishte i pari i sinagogës, – e ra ndër këmbët e Jisuit, e i lutej të hynte në shtëpinë e tij; sepse kishte një bijë të vetme, rreth dymbëdhjetë vjeç, edhe ajo po vdiste. Edhe ndërsa ai ishte duke shkuar, turmat po e shtrëngonin. Edhe një grua, që kishte rrjedhje gjaku që prej dymbëdhjetë vitesh, e cila kishte prishur gjithë pasurinë nëpër mjekët, po nuk mundi të shërohej as prej ndonjërit, u afrua nga prapa dhe preku cepin e rrobës së tij; edhe menjëherë u ndal rrjedhja e gjakut të saj. Edhe Jisui tha: Kush qe ai që më preku? Edhe ndërsa po mohonin të gjithë, Pjetri dhe ata që ishin bashkë me të thanë: Mjeshtër, turmat të shtypin e shtrëngojnë, edhe thua: Kush qe ai që më preku? Po Jisui tha: Dikush më preku, sepse unë kuptova se një fuqi doli prej meje. Edhe gruaja kur pa se nuk u fsheh, erdhi duke u dridhur, edhe i ra ndër këmbë, e i rrëfeu përpara gjithë popullit për çfarë shkaku e preku, edhe si u shërua përnjëherë. Edhe ai i tha asaj: Ki guxim, bijë, besimi yt të shpëtoi; shko në paqe. Edhe kur ai po fliste ende, vjen një njeri prej të parit të sinagogës e i thotë se jot bijë vdiq; mos e mundo mësuësin. Po Jisui kur dëgjoi, u përgjigj: Mos ki frikë; veç beso, edhe do të shpëtojë. Edhe si erdhi në shtëpi, nuk la asnjë të hynte brenda, përveç Pjetrit dhe Joanit dhe Jakovit, dhe të atit të vajzës dhe së ëmës. Edhe të gjithë po qanin e ulërinin për atë. Edhe ai tha: Mos qani; nuk vdiq, por po fle. Edhe e përqeshnin, duke ditur se vdiq. Po ai, si i nxori jashtë të gjithë, e kapi prej dore, dhe thirri duke thënë: O vashëz, ngrihu. Edhe asaj iu kthye fryma prapë, dhe u ngrit përnjëherë; edhe Jisui urdhëroi t'i jepnin asaj të hajë. Edhe prindërit e saj u habitën; po ai i porositi të mos i thonë njeriu se ç'u bë.

От Луки 8:41-56

И вот, пришел человек, именем Иаир, который был начальником синагоги; и, пав к ногам Иисуса, просил Его войти к нему в дом, потому что у него была одна дочь, лет двенадцати, и та была при смерти. Когда же Он шел, народ теснил Его. И женщина, страдавшая кровотечением двенадцать лет, которая, издержав на врачей всё имение, ни одним не могла быть вылечена, подойдя сзади, коснулась края одежды Его; и тотчас течение крови у ней остановилось. И сказал Иисус: кто прикоснулся ко Мне? Когда же все отрицались, Петр сказал и бывшие с Ним:

Наставник! народ окружает Тебя и теснит, --и Ты говоришь: кто прикоснулся ко Мне? Но Иисус сказал: прикоснулся ко Мне некто, ибо Я чувствовал силу, исшедшую из Меня. Женщина, видя, что она не утаилась, с трепетом подошла и, пав пред Ним, объявила Ему перед всем народом, по какой причине прикоснулась к Нему и как тотчас исцелилась. Он сказал ей: дерзай, дочь! вера твоя спасла тебя; иди с миром. Когда Он еще говорил это, приходит некто из дома начальника синагоги и говорит ему: дочь твоя умерла; не утруждай Учителя. Но Иисус, услышав это, сказал ему: не бойся, только веруй, и спасена будет. Придя же в дом, не позволил войти никому, кроме Петра, Иоанна и Иакова, и отца девицы, и матери. Все плакали и рыдали о ней. Но Он сказал: не плачьте; она не умерла, но спит. И смеялись над Ним, зная, что она умерла. Он же, выслав всех вон и взяв ее за руку, возгласил: девица! Встань. И возвратился дух ее; она тотчас встала, и Он велел дать ей есть. И удивились родители ее. Он же повелел им не сказывать никому о происшедшем.

Communion Hymn

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

Continued from page 2

A certain old man by the name of Onuphrius concealed his monastic and priestly dignity beneath his beggar's rags. He walked from house to house in Emesa, begging alms. At the same time, whenever he saw the possibility of turning people away from the pagan error, he preached about Christ.

Once, he came to the magnificent house of Leukippe. Accepting alms from her, he sensed that the woman was in sorrow, and he asked what was the cause of this sadness. She told the Elder about her familial misfortune. In consoling her, Onuphrius began to tell her about the one true God, about His omnipotence and mercy, and how He always grants the prayer of those turning to Him with faith. Hope filled the soul of Leukippe. She believed and accepted Holy Baptism. Soon after this it was revealed to her in a dream that she would give birth to a son, who would be a true follower of Christ. At first, Leukippe concealed her delight from her husband, but after the infant was born, she revealed the secret to her husband and also persuaded him to be baptized.

They named the baby Galaction and his parents raised him in the Christian Faith and provided him a fine education. He could make an illustrious career for himself, but Galaction sought rather an unsullied monastic life in solitude and prayer.

When Galaction turned twenty-four, his father resolved to marry him off and they found him a bride, a beautiful and illustrious girl by the name of Episteme. The son did not oppose the will of his father, but by the will of God, the wedding was postponed for a time. Visiting his betrothed, Galaction gradually revealed his faith to her. Eventually, he converted her to Christ and he secretly baptized her himself.

Besides Episteme he baptized also one of her servants, Eutolmius. The newly-illuminated decided on the initiative of Galaction, to devote themselves to the monastic life. Leaving the city, they hid themselves away on Mount Publion, where there were two monasteries, one for men and the other for women. The new monastics had to take with them all the necessities for physical toil, since the inhabitants of both monasteries were both old and infirm.

For several years the monastics struggled in work, fasting and prayer. Once, Episteme had a vision in her sleep: she and Galaction stood in a wondrous palace before a radiant King, and the King bestowed golden crowns on them. This was a prefiguring of their impending martyrdom.

The pagans became aware of the existence of the monasteries, and a military detachment was sent to apprehend their inhabitants. But the monks and the nuns succeeded in hiding themselves in the hills. Galaction, however, had no desire to flee and so he remained in his cell, reading Holy Scripture. When Episteme saw that the soldiers were leading Galaction away in chains, she began to implore the Abbess to permit her to go also, since she wanted to accept torture for Christ together with her fiancé and teacher. The Abbess tearfully blessed Episteme to do so.

The saints endured terrible torments, while supplicating and glorifying Christ. Their hands and legs were cut off, their tongues were cut out, and then they were beheaded.

Eutolmius, the former servant of Episteme, and who had become her brother in Christ and fellow ascetic in monastic struggles, secretly buried the bodies of the holy martyrs. He later wrote an account of their virtuous life and their glorious martyrdom, for his contemporaries and for posterity.

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 Protopresbyter Arthur, Newly Departed Nicholas, Maria</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 conflicts in Ukraine, Armenia, and the Middle East: 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>October 29 – November 4 Joanne Johns (B) Nick Schaeffer (B) Abigail Vrato (B) Kaila Schaeffer (B)</p> <p><u>Seven-Day Vigil Candles</u> Llukan Dylgjeri – health Michael Mogilevich - health</p>	<p><u>Church Lectionary</u></p> <p><u>Today</u> Galatians 6:11-18 Luke 8:41-56</p> <p><u>Monday</u> 1 Thessalonians 1:1-5 Luke 12:13-15, 22-31</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, Spresha, Kristin, Niko, Spiro, Angjeliki, Melod, Olgay, Ruth, Terry, Naomi, Annette, Tatiana, Lester Jr., Natalia, Otari, Lasha, Fr. Nikolas, Llukan, Marina, Sophia, Fr. Maxwell, Donna</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> 1 Thessalonians 1:6-10 Luke 12:42-48</p> <p><u>Wednesday</u> Hebrews 2:2-10 Luke 10:16-21 1 Thessalonians 2:1-8 Luke 12:48-59</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, Sandra, Enoch, John, Victoria, Melenie, Grace, Michael, Barbara, Giorgi, Molly, Jim, Chloe, Alma-Anastasia, Marianthi, Marsha, Ann, Lilly, Stephen Newly-Illumined Maximos</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 conflicts in Ukraine, Armenia, and the Middle East.</p> <p><i>[Petitions at Augmented Litany]</i> Again we pray for a cessation of the hostilities in Ukraine, Armenia, and the Middle East, and that reconciliation and peace will flourish in these places, we pray thee, hearken and have mercy.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">COFFEE HOUR</p> <p><u>November</u> 05 – Tish Desloges 12 19 26 – Tina Marlos Tsiadis</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>Thursday</u> 1 Thessalonians 2:9-14 Luke 13:1-9</p> <p><u>Friday</u> 1 Thessalonians 2:14-19 Luke 13:31-35</p> <p><u>Saturday</u> 2 Corinthians 8:1-5 Luke 9:37-43</p> <p><u>Reading the Bible in a Year</u> Nov 05: John 10-12 Nov 06: John 13-15 Nov 07: John 16-18 Nov 08: John 19-21 Nov 09: Acts 1-3 Nov 10: Acts 4-6 Nov 11: Acts 7-9</p>

The Slavery of False Fears

BY FR. BARNABAS POWELL



The Slavery of False Fears

It scared me to death! I was convinced something was lurking in the dark in my room, and I wasn't about to shut my eyes! After all, it was only my constant vigilance and watchfulness that was keeping whatever was "out there" away from me, right? Imagine my surprise when sleep finally took me and I woke up the next morning unharmed! Such is the life of a 7-year-old whose mind has convinced him that the shadows in his room are not empty!

But hey, now that I'm grown up I'm not afraid anymore! Yeah, right! Now my fears are much more nuanced and hidden. Now my fears manifest

themselves as "caution" "prudence" or even "religious." Now I've dressed up my fears so that they don't look like fear; they look like "maturity." And yet, the end result is the same: A life lived within the too-small boundaries of my own, limited, sight rather than the borderless freedom of a life lived from the perspective of confidence in God and His eternal life shared freely with me.

In fact, our whole lives are defined by what we fear! Fear things too small and life is too small. Fear that which we should fear and the vistas of the possible break open for what we can become! But remember the scriptures declare "God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind." (2 Timothy 1:7)

Look at our Gospel Lesson today in Luke 12:2-12.

The Lord said to his disciples, "Nothing is covered up that will not be revealed, or hidden that will not be known. Therefore whatever you have said in the dark shall be heard in the light, and what you have whispered in private rooms shall be proclaimed upon the housetops.

I tell you, my friends, do not fear those who kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will warn you whom to fear: fear him who, after he has killed, has power to cast into Gehenna; yes, I tell you, fear him! Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies? And not one of them is forgotten before God. Why, even the hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not; you are of more value than many sparrows.

And I tell you, every one who acknowledges me before men, the Son of man also will acknowledge before the angels of God; but he who denies me before men will be denied before the angels of God. And every one who speaks a word against the Son of man will be forgiven; but he who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven. And when they bring you before the synagogues and the rulers and the authorities, do not be anxious how or what you are to answer or what you are to say; for the Holy Spirit will teach you in that very hour what you ought to say."

Turns out the one thing we must fear isn't fearful at all! In fact, the One we must fear loves us more than we, ourselves, know how to love. But the focusing power of authentic awe and wonder is at the heart of how we are to finally put away all lesser fears and embrace Him Who is truly "awful" and worthy of our humble confession of the limits of our rational minds – God Himself.

But the Lord mixes this wisdom that "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom" (Proverbs 9:10) with the equally awe-inspiring truth that this "Awful" God loves us more than anything else! This

powerful mix of deep respect and eternal love makes a powerful combination in the heart of a man that banishes the lesser fears that enslave a man to smaller versions of himself and what he could be. All those other “fears” that compete to be “god” in our hearts instead of the true Lord of Glory enslave our lives to mere existence instead of the free and joyful life of one who has abandoned all other fears to embrace the only true “fear” that will give him life!

All other fears enslave and ultimately destroy us. Only this “fear” sets us free to order our lives and set our priorities based on the only Truth that matters: God loves you and knows who you are and invites you to be His eternal companion.

Sts. Acepimas the Bishop, Joseph the Presbyter, & Aeithalas the Deacon, Martyrs of Persia, who we remember today display this power of not fearing small things. They suffered much torment under the pagan king of Persia in the 4th century AD. Their examples of faithfully serving Christ in their ministries of Bishop, Priest, and Deacon show us the power of men who refuse to fear those who can only kill the body. They focused on being ready to stand before the awesome judgment seat of Christ and they were ready to give a faithful account of their lives to their Lord and King.

Today, what are the fears that keep you enslaved to a lesser version of yourself? Are you afraid of confrontation? Are you afraid of being hurt? Are you afraid of poverty, failure, success, or any other lesser fears that border your possibilities in too small ways? All of the wisdom of the faith is meant to reorient you and the way you think to finally put away all those lesser fears unworthy of a person created in God’s image and loved by God more than the sparrows, and embracing being Orthodox on Purpose heals these lesser fears and opens you up to the only fear you should ever have. As St. Anthony says “I no longer fear God, I love Him, and perfect love casts out fear!”

Prayer for the Week

The Mysteries of Christ you venerably did celebrate, becoming yourself a sacrifice that He received; for the cup of Christ, you drank in glory, O wise Acepimas, with your fellow athletes, O Saint, and ceaselessly pray to Christ for all of us.

<https://faithencouraged.org/the-slavery-of-false-fears/>

PENNY PARTY 2023!

We are holding our annual Penny Party on Sunday, December 3 (Just in time for St. Nicholas Day.) If you would like to make a donation of a new/ unopened item to be raffled off, please talk to Tish Desloges. Sundays are always a good day to drop off donations, but you can contact Fr. Nicholas (860-861-7468) to arrange a drop-off during the week.

Weekly Sunday School!

We will be beginning to hold a 30 minute Sunday School weekly beginning on Sunday, November 19. We ask that the children be allowed to venerate the cross fist so that they can go upstairs and get a quick snack before returning to the church for their lesson

Parish Thanksgiving

There will be a Parish Thanksgiving meal on Thursday, November 23. If you would like to attend or contribute to the meal, please let Fr. Nicholas know so that we can be sure to have enough food for everyone. Guests are welcome!

November Events

November

- 05 – 10:00am Divine Liturgy
Education Sunday
- 08 – 7:15pm Bible Study via GoogleMeets
- 12 – 10:00am Divine Liturgy
- 15 – 12:00pm 6th Hour
7:15pm Bible Study via GoogleMeets
- 17 – 6:00pm Fun Night
- 19 – 10:00am Divine Liturgy
- 21 – 9:00am Divine Liturgy (*Entrance of the Theotokos*)
- 22 – 12:00pm 6th Hour
7:15pm Bible Study via GoogleMeets
- 23 - **Thanksgiving**
- 26 – 10:00am Divine Liturgy
- 29 – 12:00pm 6th Hour
7:15pm Bible Study via GoogleMeets

Can't join us in person?

We stream our services on our YouTube Channel:

<https://www.youtube.com/@sspeterpaulorthodoxchurch01810>



If you wish,
you can be a slave of passions,
and if you wish,
you can remain free
and not submit to their yoke;
for God has created you
with that power.

~~~~~  
St. Antony the Great

Brotherhood of the Holy Cross 2016



## Be Not Fearful for God is Near

Sometimes we enter a dark night of the soul, where God seems distant from us. This is only an illusion, for God is closer to us than our own breath. These times are allowed by God to bring us closer to Him, much like the loving parent who stands her child on his feet, walks a few feet away holding out her arms, and waits for the child to take his first steps. She is ever ready to reach out and lift the child up should he start to fall, but she knows she must distance herself for a few moments if the child is going to learn to stand on his own two feet. We are like that.

When you find it difficult to pray, light your lampada before your icons and sit silently before them. Say to God, I am hurting and sad, and am unable to speak to You, so I need You to speak to my heart. Sometimes the most profitable spiritual growth can take place in such periods of brokenness because we see in these moments how very much we need God and depend upon Him.

Be not fearful, dear ones, for God is near, and will not leave you. The Lord is allowing these dry moments, where you are fearing He has left you, as the way of making you reach out to Him. When we are struggling, or even suffering, we grow stronger in our faith. Prayer will return as long as you give God moments in your life when you avail yourself in silence, and listen for His voice.

The parent who constantly does his child's homework, does him no favor, for the child never learns to stand on his own, and will forever remain dependent on his parent. The Lord wants us to grow strong in our faith, while entering into a mature relationship with Him. If we do not learn to stand on our own, we will forever be like the codependent child, never having the skills to reach high places, and forever remaining weak and fearful.

With love in Christ,  
Abbot Tryphon