

Sts. Peter and Paul Albanian Orthodox Church

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

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October 18, 2020

19TH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST: HOLY APOSTLE AND EVANGELIST
LUKE
TONE 2

Today 10:00am Divine Liturgy
Wed. 21 7:15pm Bible Study via Google
Sun. 25 10:00am Divine Liturgy

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

Fast Days: Strict fast Wednesday and Friday.(fasting from meat, fish, eggs, dairy, oil, wine and hard spirits as you are able.)

Troparion – Tone 5
(St. Luke)

Let us praise with sacred songs the holy Apostle Luke, the recorder of the joyous Gospel of Christ and the scribe of the Acts of the Apostles; for his writings are a testimony of the Church of Christ. He is the physician of human weaknesses and infirmities. He heals the wounds of our souls, and constantly intercedes for our salvation.

Kontakion – Tone 2
(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.

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

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

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

SCRIPTURE THIS WEEK

Church Lectionary

Today

2 Corinthians 11:31-12:9
Luke 8:5-15

Monday

Philippians 2:12-16
Luke 9:18-22

Tuesday

Philippians 2:17-23
Luke 9:23-27

Wednesday

Philippians 2:24-30
Luke 9:44-50

Thursday

Philippians 3:1-8
Luke 9:49-56

Friday

Philippians 3:8-19
Luke 10:1-15

Saturday

2 Corinthians 1:8-11
Luke 7:1-10

Reading the Bible in a Year

Oct 18: Matthew 22-24
Oct 19: Matthew 25-28
Oct 20: Mark 1-3
Oct 21: Mark 4-6
Oct 22: Mark 7-9
Oct 23: Mark 10-12
Oct 24: Mark 13-16

Our Annual Parish Meeting will be held on Sunday, November 1. If you would like to attend and take part, you may do so by coming to Church or via an online meeting forum from your own home. If you plan on taking part, please let Fr. Nicholas know as soon as possible, as well as whether you wish to attend live or over the internet so we can make sure as many people as possible can participate. Please email Father Nick at: frnicholas490@aol.com with the subject line: Parish Annual Meeting

When we live as problem centered people we miss the mark

There are a lot of fear based communities in our world. Some are religious and some are political. All are guilty of missing the mark when it comes to the message of the Church.

We Christians were not programmed to be victims, living in fear. For the Christian the True Self is the one that is created in the image and likeness of God. As children of the Most High we are meant to live, not in fear, but in a joyful state, knowing and experiencing the love of God.

Our God is not a god of anger and vengeance, but one Who invites us into a relationship based in loving communion. God is not waiting to send down fire upon our heads as an angry parent, but rather a loving Father Who desires that we connect with our true selves and put off the false self.

When we live as problem centered people we miss the mark. If we focus on those things in our lives that are negative, such as struggles with a particular sin, or negative thinking, we fail to live up to the true self.

Many therapists keep their patients in a codependent state by giving them labels that speak of mental illness. Political parties often keep themselves in power by playing to the negative labels they've created for the opposition. Religions often do the same thing, even with their own adherents, keeping them hooked in a negative pattern that disallows a spiritual growth that leads to healing and spiritual well being.

Fear based communities use abuse to keep their people in line, leaving them in a state of perpetual infancy, unable to reach their full potential and preventing them from realizing their true self. Such institutions, political or religious, prevent people from flourishing.

God invites us to integrate our lives as His children and utilize all the gifts He has given us which lead to fulfilled lives. Fear is vanquished for the Christian precisely because we ARE His children. In Orthodoxy the priests and bishops are called upon to encourage the faithful to live lives in faithfulness to God's commandments, not because there will be grave consequences if we don't, but because of the great joy that is ours when we have communion with Him.

<https://blogs.ancientfaith.com/morningoffering/2020/10/living-without-fear/>



Although prayer is a habitual action for us, it needs preparation. For anyone who knows how to read and write, what is more usual than reading and writing? Yet if we sit down to read and write we do not do so suddenly, we first get ourselves into the mood for what we are going to do. This kind of preparation is all the more necessary before we start to pray, particularly if our occupation immediately beforehand was very different from prayer.

So, morning or evening, immediately before you begin to repeat your prayers, stand awhile, sit for awhile, or walk a little and try to steady your mind and turn it away from all worldly activities and objects. After this, think who He is to whom you turn in prayer, then recollect who you are; who it is who is about to start this invocation to Him in prayer. Do this in such a way as to awake in your heart a feeling of humility and reverent awe that your are standing in the presence of God. It is the beginning of prayer, and a good beginning is half the complete task.

-St. Theophan the Recluse



October/November Events

October

18 – 10:00am Divine Liturgy

21 – 7:15pm Bible Study

25 – 10:00am Divine Liturgy

(St. Demetrius Memorial)

28 – 7:15pm Bible Study

November

1 – 10:00am Divine Liturgy

Annual Parish Meeting

4 – 7:15pm Bible Study

8 – 10:00am Divine Liturgy

11 – 7:15pm Bible Study

15 – 10:00am Divine Liturgy

2 Corinthians 11:31-12:9 (Epistle)

The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is blessed forever, knows that I am not lying. In Damascus the governor, under Aretas the king, was guarding the city of the Damascenes with a garrison, desiring to arrest me; but I was let down in a basket through a window in the wall, and escaped from his hands. It is doubtless not profitable for me to boast. I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord: I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago – whether in the body I do not know, or whether out of the body I do not know, God knows – such a one was caught up to the third heaven. And I know such a man – whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows – how he was caught up into Paradise and heard inexpressible words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter. Of such a one I will boast; yet of myself I will not boast, except in my infirmities. For though I might desire to boast, I will not be a fool; for I will speak the truth. But I refrain, lest anyone should think of me above what he sees me to be or hears from me. And lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I be exalted above measure. Concerning this thing I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me. And He said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

Luke 8:5-15 (Gospel)

“A sower went out to sow his seed. And as he sowed, some fell by the wayside; and it was trampled down, and the birds of the air devoured it. Some fell on rock; and as soon as it sprang up, it withered away because it lacked moisture. And some fell among thorns, and the thorns sprang up with it and choked it. But others fell on good ground, sprang up, and yielded a crop a hundredfold.” When He had said these things He cried, “He who has ears to hear, let him hear!” Then His disciples asked Him, saying, “What does this parable mean?” And He said, “To you it has been given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God, but to the rest it is given in parables, that ‘Seeing they may not see, And hearing they may not understand.’ Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God. Those by the wayside are the ones who hear; then the devil comes and takes away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved. But the ones on the rock are those who, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, who believe for a while and in time of temptation fall away. Now the ones that fell among thorns are those who, when they have heard, go out and are choked with cares, riches, and pleasures of life, and bring no fruit to maturity. But the ones that fell on the good ground are those who, having heard the word with a noble and good heart, keep it and bear fruit with patience.

Children's Word

Being wise about God

Have you ever walked around in a library? Maybe you've walked around in the grown-up section, and you've seen books and books about things you don't even understand. Then you know how much there really is to learn!

In today's Gospel reading, our Lord reminds us how much there is to learn...about God. Jesus had special helpers, His disciples. God gave the disciples special help so they could help Him. These men were just regular people, but God gave them special help. In the Gospel, Jesus prays, “I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to babes; yes, Father, for such was your gracious will.”

We know we have a lot to learn about God and about our faith! But the most important thing is that we know that Jesus is God, and that we want to help Him with His special work. We can learn more and more about everything. We can read every book in the library! But the most important thing is that we know God and that we want to serve Him.

Let's always remember how God gave special help to regular people. He did that so they could serve Him and serve others. Did you know that God will do this for us too, if we ask Him?

SAINT LUKE THE EVANGELIST

Do you have a favorite author? Maybe you really like a book series, and you wish it would never end. Maybe you keep wanting to read more and more.

The Holy Bible was written by lots of authors. And when you get to reading it, you might have a favorite author or a favorite chapter. Today we celebrate the feastday of Saint Luke. He is called an evangelist, because he wrote down the Good News (evangelion, in Greek) about our Lord, Jesus Christ. Remember, we have four Evangelists: Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. They all wrote about Jesus' life, what He said, and what happened to Him.

One great thing about Saint Luke is that he wrote a sequel to his Gospel! You might have heard some stories from the Acts of the Apostles. That's the chapter of the Bible where we hear about the new Christian Church. We hear about how it grew and grew. We hear about the first Christians who gave so much to spread the good news of Jesus Christ. We hear about the dangerous adventures of Saint Paul and Saint Peter.

We love Saint Luke the Evangelist because he gave us the Good News too. And we can read that Good News anytime we want to read the Bible!

We celebrate Saint Luke today, October 18th.

What's a Layman to do?

I am often astonished and greatly grieved to hear stories of people being told, whether by another lay person, or by some clergy or other religious, that they ought not to pray the Jesus Prayer because they don't have a spiritual guide. Or that the practice of hesychasm associated with the Jesus Prayer is not a spirituality meant for lay people, but only for monks and nuns - and even then often only for a select few. Such comments irk me not only because they are in direct contradiction to the teachings of the great Fathers and mystics of both the East and the West, but also because they are in direct contradiction to the teachings of Scripture. Do not the Scriptures encourage us to fix our minds on the Lord, to meditate on His Word day and not, to "pray without ceasing?" The Scriptures make no distinction here between who it is that ought to be praying ceaselessly; they just issue the general command, which implies that all of us who truly believe on God's Word are called to pray without ceasing.

Jesus Himself encouraged us to evoke His name, particularly when making requests from our loving "Abba," our Heavenly Father. And there are numerous references of people in the Scriptures invoking the name of God in times of distress, need, temptation, or what have you. Who among us is not almost constantly in some form of temptation? Doesn't it make sense for all believing Christians to continually call on the name of God - the name which is above every other name - as the most powerful weapon against temptation? I can't comprehend why anyone, priest, religious, lay, or otherwise, would discourage pious people from praying the name of Jesus, whether it be a simple and humble invoking of His name, or the full "Jesus Prayer." What better weapon have we in our day-to-day lives to continually call forth God's presence within us?

In his excellent little work *On the Prayer of Jesus*, St. Ignatius Brianchaninov sternly reprehends those clergy who discourage the laity from praying the Jesus Prayer and practicing hesychasm. Such prayer, he says, is for all the Church because we have no mightier weapon against our enemy than the holy name of Our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Both he, St. Theophan the Recluse, and St. Basil of Poiana Marului (spiritual father to St. Paisius Velichkovsky) go so far as to refer to those who discourage such a practice as fools who have fallen into spiritual delusion!

A more "moderate" approach to this problem says that lay people can certainly practice the Jesus Prayer and hesychasm, but only under the guidance of an experienced elder or spiritual father/mother. But this again flies in the face of what the great mystics of past ages have told us in the writings they left behind. The spiritual fathers and mothers of the past (at least so far as I have been able to discover) are in complete agreement that the in an ideal world the practice of the Jesus Prayer and hesychasm would take place under the guidance of an experienced elder. However, these same mystics recognize quite openly that we do not live in an ideal world! Even during periods that we today consider "golden ages" of the Church, the saints of those ages bemoaned the lack of experienced spiritual guides. They speak of the general hunger among the laity of the Church for a deeper spiritual life, a more intimate communion with God the Trinity, but in the next breath they acknowledge the fact that scarcely one or two people per generation really have the experience necessary to guide folks on their spiritual journey.

So what do these saints suggest? Well, they suggest everything I've been suggesting here: READ THE WRITINGS OF THE SPIRITUAL ELDERS OF THE PAST, search the Scriptures, associate with other spiritually-minded people who are also seeking a deeper relationship with God, attend the Church services regularly, go to confession frequently (which reminds me, I'm about due), receive Communion as frequently as possible. Above all, they recommend maintaining a humble disposition. St. Basil of Poiana Marului emphasizes this particularly. While it is certainly possible that we may have mystical experiences during our prayer, that is not the goal of our prayer life, and in fact such experiences are generally reserved for a select few. Not even all the great mystics of the Church (East or West) had such deep mystical experiences. We should approach prayer humbly, not expecting to reach the heights of contemplation in this life, but working towards such contemplation with hope nonetheless.

With regards to those who fear spiritual delusion if anyone attempts to practice the Jesus Prayer and hesychasm without a spiritual father/mother, I again refer you to St. Basil's excellent little series of "introductions" to some of the Fathers of the Philokalia. The Fathers of the Philokalia, he says, speak of the dangers of delusion not to discourage us from practicing the Jesus Prayer and hesychasm, but so that when such temptations arise we might have ample warning and sound teaching for combating delusion. Again this is why it is necessary for us to search both the Scriptures and the writings of the great mystics, particularly in times where spiritual elders are so few and far between. These writings warn us of the dangers of the spiritual life in order that we might avoid those dangers, not in order that we might excuse ourselves from entering ever more deeply into the spiritual life.

In all of this, the spirit of humility and child-like simplicity are our greatest defenses against delusion. Personally I believe the greatest mystics of the Church are not those who left behind volumes of writings to guide us through the spiritual life. Rather, I believe that the Church's greatest mystics are those who held simple and child-like relationships with our Heavenly Father. The man in the village of Ars during the time of St. John Vianney who simply sat in Church looking at God in the Eucharist while God looked back at him; the illiterate woman in a third-world country who, despite the fact that she lived a hundred miles from the nearest Catholic Church, was still the light of Christ in her otherwise non-Christian village; the farmer who has little to no time for reading books, but prays the whole time he goes about his daily tasks, performing all for the love of God and giving abundantly to others of the blessings that God showers upon him; the simple housewife who lovingly performs the hum-drum household tasks of her family out of love both for them and for God; or the worker in the secular world who, day in and day out, strives to be the light of Christ shining in an otherwise darkened world - these people, I believe, leave behind the greatest testament to the spiritual life. No amount of "book learnin'" can take the place of the witness that these people give us. So in the absence of spiritual elders, we must look to one another. We're all in this together, after all.

May heaven consume us!

2-е Коринфянам 11:31-12:9

Бог и Отец Господа нашего Иисуса Христа, благословенный во веки, знает, что я не лгу. В Дамаске областной правитель царя Ареты стерег город Дамаск, чтобы схватить меня; (11-33) и я в корзине был спущен из окна по стене и избежал его рук. Не полезно хвалиться мне, ибо я приду к видениям и откровениям Господним. Знаю человека во Христе, который назад тому четырнадцать лет (в теле ли--не знаю, вне ли тела--не знаю: Бог знает) восхищен был до третьего неба. И знаю о таком человеке ([только] не знаю--в теле, или вне тела: Бог знает), что он был восхищен в рай и слышал неизреченные слова, которых человеку нельзя пересказать. Таким [человеком] могу хвалиться; собою же не похваюсь, разве только немощами моими. Впрочем, если захочу хвалиться, не буду неразумен, потому что скажу истину; но я удерживаюсь, чтобы кто не подумал о мне более, нежели сколько во мне видит или слышит от меня. И чтобы я не превозносился чрезвычайностью откровений, дано мне жало в плоть, ангел сатаны, удручать меня, чтобы я не превозносился. Трижды молил я Господа о том, чтобы удалил его от меня. Но [Господь] сказал мне: 'довольно для тебя благодати Моей, ибо сила Моя совершается в немощи'. И потому я гораздо охотнее буду хвалиться своими немощами, чтобы обитала во мне сила Христова.

От Луки 8:5-15

вышел сеятель сеять семя свое, и когда он сеял, иное упало при дороге и было потоптано, и птицы небесные поклевали его; а иное упало на камень и, взойдя, засохло, потому что не имело влаги; а иное упало между тернием, и выросло терние и заглушило его; а иное упало на добрую землю и, взойдя, принесло плод сторичный. Сказав сие, возгласил: кто имеет уши слышать, да слышит! Ученики же Его спросили у Него: что бы значила притча сия? Он сказал: вам дано знать тайны Царствия Божия, а прочим в притчах, так что они видя не видят и слыша не понимают. Вот что значит притча сия: семя есть слово Божие; а упавшее при пути, это суть слушающие, к которым потом приходит диавол и уносит слово из сердца их, чтобы они не уверовали и не спаслись; а упавшее на камень, это те, которые, когда услышат слово, с радостью принимают, но которые не имеют корня, и временем веруют, а во время искушения отпадают; а упавшее в терние, это те, которые слушают слово, но, отходя, заботами, богатством и наслаждениями житейскими подавляются и не приносят плода; а упавшее на добрую землю, это те, которые, услышав слово, хранят его в добром и чистом сердце и приносят плод в терпении. Сказав это, Он возгласил: кто имеет уши слышать, да слышит!

2 e Korintasve 11:31-12:9

Perëndia dhe Ati i Zotit tonë Jezu Krisht, që është i bekuar përjetë, e di se unë nuk gënjej. Në Damask, qeveritari i mbretit Areta e ruante qytetin e Damaskasve për të më zënë, por nga një dritare më ulën përgjatë murit me një shportë, dhe shpëtova nga duart e tij. Sigurisht nuk kam dobi nga të mburrurit; prandaj do t'ia filloj me vegimet dhe zbulesat e Zotit. Unë njoh një njeri në Krishtin, i cili, para katërmbëdhjetë vjetësh (a ishte në trup, a ishte jashtë trupit, nuk e di; Perëndia e di), u rrëmbye gjer në të tretin qiell. Dhe e di se ai njeri (a me trupin ose pa trupin, nuk e di, Perëndia e di), u rrëmbye në parajsë dhe dëgjoji fjalë të patregueshme, që nuk është e lejuar të thuhet nga njeri. Për atë njeri unë do të krenohem, por nuk do të krenohem për veten time, veç se për dobësitë e mia. Edhe sikur të doja të krenohesha, nuk do të isha i marrë, sepse do të flisja të vërtetën; por nuk e bëj këtë, se mos ndonjë më çmon më tepër nga ajo që më sheh, a më tepër nga ajo që dëgjon nga unë. Dhe, që të mos më rritet mendja për shkak të jashtëzakonshmërisë së zbulesave, m'u dha një gjëmb në mish, një engjell i Satanit, për të më rënë me grushta, që të mos mbahem me të madh. Lidhur me këtë iu luta tri herë Zotit që ta largonte nga unë. Por ai më tha: "Hiri im të mjafton, sepse fuqia ime përsoset në dobësi." Prandaj me kënaqësi të madhe do të krenohem më tepër për dobësitë e mia, që fuqia e Krishtit të rrijë tek unë.

Luka 8:5-15

"Një mbjellës doli të mbjellë farën e vet; dhe, ndërsa po mbillte, një pjesë ra gjatë rrugës, u shkel dhe zogjtë e qiellit e hëngrën. Një pjesë tjetër ra në gurishte dhe, sapo mbiu, u tha për mungesë vlage. Një pjesë tjetër ra ndër ferra; ferrat u rritën bashkë me të dhe ia zunë frymën. Kurse një pjesë ra në tokë të mirë, mbiu dhe dha fryt njëqindfish." Si i tha këto gjëra, thirri: "Kush ka veshë për të dëgjuar, le të dëgjojë!" Atëherë dishepujt e vet e pyetën çfarë kuptimi kishte ajo shëmbëlltyrë. Dhe ai tha: "Juve ju është dhënë të njihni misteret e mbretërisë së Perëndisë; por të tjerëve me anë të shëmbëlltyrave, që ata, duke shikuar të mos shohin dhe, duke dëgjuar të mos kuptojnë. Ky është kuptimi i shëmbëlltyrës: fara është fjala e Perëndisë. Ata përgjatë rrugës janë ata që e dëgjojnë fjalën; por pastaj vjen djalli dhe ua merr fjalën nga zemra e tyre, që ata të mos besojnë dhe të mos shpëtojnë. Ata mbi gurishte janë ata që, kur dëgjojnë, e presin fjalën me gëzim; por ata nuk kanë rrënjë, besojnë për njëfarë kohe, por në momentin e sprovës tërhiqen. Pjesa që ka rënë ndër ferra janë ata që e dëgjuan fjalën; por, gjatë rrugës, ua zënë frymën shqetësimet, pasuritë dhe kënaqësitë e kësaj jete, dhe nuk arrijnë të piqen. Por pjesa që ra në tokë të mirë janë ata që, pasi e dëgjuan fjalën, e ruajnë në zemër të ndershme dhe të mirë dhe japin fryt me qëndrueshmëri."