

# A Voice in the Wilderness

The Newsletter of St. George Orthodox Christian Church



Rev. Matthew P. Binkewicz, Pastor

*Christ is in our midst!*

*He is and ever shall be!*



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19<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost—Christ performs Two Miracles

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Adam and Eve were not naked but clothed with the shining glory of God. This is the natural state of what it means to be human – it is where God is calling us to be. You and I are meant to shine with the grace and glory of God.

Next, it says that he is the ruler of the synagogue. What is a synagogue? A place where worship is offered up to God throughout the day. It's also a place where the Scriptures are read and contemplated. Here we see a symbol for our mind: it should be a place where the Scriptures are heard and contemplated; prayers and continuous doxology rise as incense before God.

What does a ruler do? He keeps order. He drives out the spiritual merchants that want to set up shop in our Father's house. He pushes out the noise and distractions of the world to

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This morning we read about Jairus, a man who comes to our Lord and pleads for the healing of his morbidly sick daughter. I want to take some time to walk through this fascinating narrative and look at the spiritual symbolism and how we can apply this story to our own lives.

First, let's look at the name Jairus, which means "he enlightens" or "he shines." The name is symbolic of our spiritual state before the fall into sin.

++ 19<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost ++

+St. Theophanes the Merciful+

Epistle: 2 Corinthians 11:31–12:9

Gospel: Luke: 8: 41-56

St. George Orthodox Christian Church is a community of believers who strive to live a life according to the Gospel of Christ and teachings of the Church.

We worship God in Trinity - Father+Son+Holy Spirit.

We are dedicated to Christ's commandment, *Love the Lord your God with all your heart, ad with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself.*

## ***On Faith in the Christian Life, by St. Seraphim of Chernigov***

A young man can, by the strength of his faith, overcome all difficulties in the arts and sciences, all temptations, flights of fancy, and the struggle against self-conceit and denials.

A young man who preserves truth and piety in the depths of his heart can ask for an indication of his path in life, for the manifestation of God's will in decisions, in the most serious and important questions of this age, such as employment and marriage.

Fathers and mothers

can, by the power of faith, ask for a blessing for every work, especially for the upbringing and guidance of children, in view of their obedience and responsibility before God, and through their prayers, they can save their children from dangers and accidents that could lead to destruction.

Children can, by their faith and understanding of Christian duties, support their parents in their old age and prepare them for the upcoming transition to eternity with frequent communion of the

Holy Mysteries and their union with Christ.

The elderly can, by their faith, gain respect, influence on those around them, love, friendship, trust, and entreat the Lord for the gift of mentorship, leadership, and finally, prayerfully entreat for themselves a painless and peaceful end.

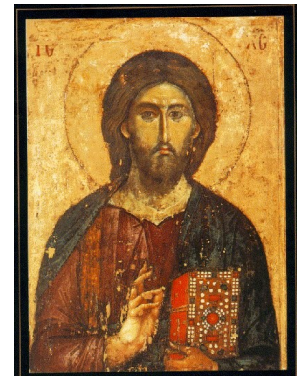
Those who established themselves and are perfected in faith can, in fiery prayer before the crucified Christ and His Most Pure and Most Blessed Mother of God,

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We invite all to worship in our services. Sunday Divine Liturgy begins at 9:30 AM

If you have any questions about the church or would like to speak with our pastor, please call Fr. Matthew at 607-280-1586

Glory be to Jesus Christ.  
Glory be Forever.





As the deliverer  
of captives  
and defender  
of the poor,  
healer of the infirm  
and champion of kings,  
victorious great  
martyr George  
intercede with Christ  
our God that our souls  
may be saved.

**News and Notes**

We welcome all who are with us today for the Centennial Celebration of our Church.

**Pray without ceasing (1 Thess. 5.17)**

Please keep the following in your prayers: Mother Onufria, Larissa, Jack, Evan, Ryan, Anatoly, Alexey, Heidi, Mackenzie, Lisa, Jeff, David, Carol, Debbie, Linda, Daniel, Michael, Abraham, Karen, George, Rochelle, Theresa, Tamam, Patti, Priscilla, Helen, Loretta, Sybil, Frankie, Jim, the homeless, the hungry, victims of abuse and violence, & those persecuted for their faith in Christ.

**St. Theophanes the Merciful of Gaza**

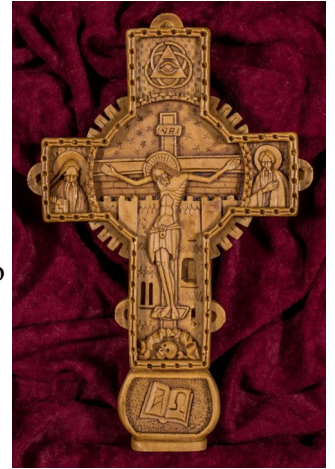
Saint Theophanes the Merciful was an inhabitant of the Syrian city of Gaza. He was very kind and merciful. He took in vagrants, he helped the poor and the sick, and he spent all his substance on help for the needy, while he himself remained in want.

Saint Theophanes did not grieve at all over the loss of his property, but he lost his health, and sickness caused him great suffering. His body began to swell up, to

rot, and to give off a stench. This ordeal he also endured in good spirit, giving thanks to God for all things.

A fierce storm raged while he was dying, and his wife grieved that she would not be able to give him proper burial. The saint comforted her: “Weep not, woman, for up to now the trial has lasted, but here comes help from the Merciful God, since in the hour of my death the storm will cease, by the will of God.” So it occurred: just as he gave up his soul to God, calmness prevailed.

After death the body of Saint Theophanes became completely cleansed of wounds and decay and became fragrant, giving forth abundant healing myrrh.



**On Faith in the Christian Life, cont'd from p.1**

ask forgiveness for the erring, the hardened, the perishing, and give God’s blessing to the powerless, to those who are tortured by sorrows and trials, who are mad with grief or the loss of a loved one.

They can propitiate the Lord in disasters, shocks, and illnesses that were justly sent down upon the people and the country; entreat a spirit of love, patience, humility and understanding; comfort all those who mourn, turn another away from a fall into sin, return an ailing child to his parents healthy, destroy evil intentions, reveal the true path to happiness to men and be inspired by self-sacrifice, and offer themselves as a sacrifice for the love of Christ, for the sake of truth and the enlightenment of the people. A believer can always gladden his parents, comfort his neighbor, labor for the glory of his homeland, and bring happiness and joy into the lives of others.

**Faith and delusion**

It’s rare to find people who deny the power of faith, but ask them who or

what they believe in. People of learning often attribute the word “faith” to either imagination or irrationality; yet even the most godless person admits that in many treatments, only faith helps!

In the mouths of some people, faith has a very particular and unaccepta-



ble meaning, as, for example, among people who don’t confess God, who are convinced that the world was created chemically, by the will of nature, which is nothing but natural science, well-known to all atheists. These people take the word “faith” from the

verb “to believe,”<sup>1</sup> for example, the word of a professor, a scientific conclusion, the word of a friend, and thus it takes on the meaning of trust.

Others, secular people, who are ready to fast and pray from time to time but who pray more, so to speak, with their nerves and the impressionability of their imagination than with their soul, which constantly craves for earthly goods, mention faith at every step, attaching a spiritual meaning to it, yet the meaning of the word is unclear in their hearts. They believe everything and everyone equally: God, the doctor, books, newspapers, celestial phenomena, sorcerers, fortune-tellers, healers, and so on. They’re even convinced that their faith is exactly the same as that which is preached in the Gospel.

“I believe in my own way,” many also say. The sad result of unbelief! Isn’t it amazing that everyone is taught grammar so no one writes in his own way, but according to the rules? They try to teach everyone

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***Homily on the Christ healing the a Woman and Raises a Young Girl from death , (cont'd from p.1)***

keep the interior space holy. But now we see a tragedy: the daughter of Jairus is deathly sick. The synagogue of his heart has lost its doxology and is filled with grief as he works his way through the noise of the crowd and begs at the feet of Jesus. What does this sickly daughter represent? She is our soul, our spirit, our free will, our attention. She is, in the terminology of the Church Fathers, the nous – the spiritual eye of the soul – and that which makes us according to the image of God.

She is sick to the point of death – and so are we. Our sinful habits kill the spirit inside us. They sicken it first, and if there is no repentance, spiritual death follows. Spiritual death is, of course, separation from communion with God. But there is a Savior, a Healer, and like Jairus, we must seek out our Savior, fall at His feet, and beg for Him to have mercy on us and heal us.

Then begins a journey of faith. Jairus must walk the road with Christ through the crowd. We too must walk in the way of Christ, fulfilling His commandments even if we have not yet received healing – even if things seem to be getting worse. Fortunately, along this journey of faith, we begin to see others who are healed. Perhaps they are people that we know, or perhaps we come to know them and their story by reading the Lives of the Saints (which every Orthodox Christian should be doing).

The woman with the issue of blood is healed while Jairus and Jesus are walking on the path. This woman suffered from bleeding for twelve years.

In back to back verses, the Apostle Luke makes a point to also mention that the daughter of Jairus is twelve years old. This recalls the teaching of ancestral sin – that is our will is inclined toward sin even from our youth. We are born into this world spiritually damaged and in need of healing – our souls continuously bleed with the sinful passions. Even from our childhood, we need the Savior. Now when this older woman with the issue of blood is healed, we hear from our Lord, “thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace.”

Let’s look at wholeness and peace and see how they are really one. We are all fragmented inwardly. We were designed by God to be whole, focused on God and in

communion with Him. Sin shatters our inward unity, scatters our attention, and leaves us inwardly bleeding and half-dead. Healing is wholeness. It is reorienting ourselves to God, focusing on the one thing needful, and finding inner cohesion. When we have wholeness, we have peace. The inverse is also true. Antonyms for peace include discord and disharmony as well as war. These are things that lack unity, lack wholeness.

When we receive spiritual healing from Christ, we can have peace and wholeness. Then and only then. All other peace is a false peace. Just look at the world around us and see how it tries to force peace through compulsion, domination, and manipulation. “Peace through strength” has been the motto of world leaders from Roman Emperors to US Presidents. That means peace by the sword.

But a sword is something that cuts and divides, it tears apart unity and wholeness. Such a mode of being can only bring temporary peace.

The healing of this woman by our Lord occurs for several reasons, and one is to encourage Jairus – to strengthen his resolve. In a similar way, we have past and present miracles to help strengthen our faith. Jairus is about to receive bad news – “your daughter is dead, don’t trouble the Master.” The enemy whispers to us, “Don’t bother with Christianity; it is powerless to help you.” Or he says, “You’ve been following Christ on this road all this time and where has it gotten you? Sure, others have been healed but you haven’t been. Give it up, you’re a hopeless case.”

But then our Lord’s words pierce our inner darkness and sorrow: “Fear not; only believe and she will be made whole.” Don’t be afraid of the sin, darkness, devil, hell, temptations, etc. Instead, believe – believe that we serve a good God who loves us so much! A good God who journeys along side us on this road of sorrow, a road packed with a crowd that pushes and shoves – just like our thoughts are constantly pushing and shoving our attention and our free will away from God. But in the midst of this chaotic darkness, put your faith in God that He will heal you.

Next in this story, we find Jesus at the house. Everyone is weeping the death of the daughter. It seems to be

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a hopeless case. Our Lord says, "Weep not!" That doesn't mean we shouldn't weep for our sins and brokenness, but that we shouldn't weep "as those who have no hope" (1 Thess. 4:13). Our Lord says she is sleeping, and the crowd mocks and laughs at Him. At the surface level, what our Lord said was not factual – she was dead. If there were fact checkers back then, they would have gone crazy. While our Lord's words may not have seemed factual, they were true. He is the Author of life, and for Him, resurrecting the dead is like waking a sleeping person.

As He enters the home and the room of the sickly girl, He permits no one to follow Him except three Apostles and the girl's parents. We too, when we enter the inner room of the heart, must push out the crowd that has gathered there. Through prayer and attention – which we discussed in last week's homily – we clear the heart of noise and distractions. We must be careful about who we let in, who we expose this sickly, dying daughter to. Our Lord Jesus is in the room, which is obvious in its meaning. The Apostles are also there. They represent the Church's clergy – especially those who hear our confession – thereby aiding us in the struggle against inner death. The girl's father and mother are there as well. They represent loved ones who pray for us and help us in our struggle toward resurrection.

Our Lord then raises the girl, granting life to what was once dead. He desires to raise each one of us as well, to give us a new and fresh start. It doesn't matter if your soul has been dead for a day, twelve years, forty years, or eighty years. It doesn't matter. God both can and wants to heal you, no matter how dead or dark you feel inside. The biblical passage then states, "Her parents were astonished," just as those around us will be when God resurrects the dead little soul that is inside us. We can then be like Jairus, "he who shines," and send up unceasing doxology and thanksgiving from the synagogue of our heart.

One last note: Our Lord commands food to be given to her. After we have gone to confession and sought God through prayer, we too should partake of the spiritual banquet, the Eucharist, which is "for the remission of sins and unto life everlasting. Amen"

correct pronunciation so no one speaks in his own way.

The government makes laws so everyone would live by the rules, not in their own way. We all calculate time and count the hours according to the rules, not in our own way. It's not permitted to build houses without following the rules of construction, so they won't collapse in their own way; but when it comes to belief, everyone can do that in their own way, and this is considered permissible and practically a law! Probably no authority is capable of forbidding every man from being deluded in his own way!

### **Faith and confession**

Confessing Christ *before men* (Mt. 10:32) is a necessary and saving work for a true disciple of Christ. He who only believes in his heart and conceals his faith isn't pleasing to the Lord. Why, some may wonder, doesn't God recognize faith alone, without words, without testimony before men? The holy Apostle Paul gives a direct and clear answer to this question. Explaining the relationship between faith and confession of it, he says: *For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation* (Rom. 10:10); that is, sincere faith leads to righteousness, and oral confession leads to salvation. Righteousness requires heartfelt faith, while salvation, which is greater than righteousness, requires confession with the mouth.

Faith and confession are, of course, two sides of the same coin, for faith hidden in the depths of the heart and revealed outwardly before all men in both word and deed is called confession; faith and confession are inseparable. What kind of faith is it if it doesn't manifest itself? And what kind of confession is it when it's in words but doesn't reside in the heart and isn't justified by deeds? Faith without confession is a feigned, hidden, and imperfect faith.

### **Faith and love**

There are two foundations for knowing the will of God: You need faith in God, your Creator, Benefactor, and righteous Judge, and you need sincere devotion and love for your Savior and Redeemer. If faith and love are necessary in everyday affairs and human relations, then all the more so in matters of being, perfection, eternal life, and the Divine law.

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