

A Voice in the Wilderness

The Newsletter of St. George Orthodox Christian Church



Rev. Matthew P. Binkewicz, Pastor

Glory be to Jesus Christ! Glory be Forever!



Volume 10 Issue 466

2nd Sunday after Pentecost-Christ call His Disciples

June 6, 2021



Christ calls Peter and Andrew, James and John, the sons of Zebedee, and immediately, they leave their nets to follow Christ. They willingly sacrifice everything in order to follow Christ, to serve Him, and become the “fishers of men” that Christ has called them to be. Their response is astonishing, childlike in its innocence and manly in its ready and courageous response.

These disciples, all fishermen, left their homes and families, their livelihood, everything, to follow Christ. Often, they didn’t know where their next meal would come from or where they would lay their heads to sleep. After Christ’s resurrection, they were imprisoned and persecuted, tortured, and, eventually crucified, for sharing the Gospel, the Good News that Christ the long-awaited Messiah, had come to give new life to all, a new identity to us fallen sons and daughters of Adam. In fact, just like Simon and Andrew, all of the disciples except John were martyred for that “Yes!” to Christ’s calling.

In other words, in calling them to be “fishers of men,” Christ God was not calling them to a life of ease, of power through their leadership, of earthly riches, but rather, of self-denial, of

(continued p. 3)

+Sunday-All Saints of America+
+ 2nd Sunday after Pentecost +

Epistle: Romans 2:10-16

Gospel: Matthew 4: 18-23

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 living out Christ’s commandment to, *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.*

The sanctification of the human body, Metropolitan Athanasios

A human being is a temple of the living God. This is an apostolic teaching of our Church which means that, just as the grace of God, the grace of the Holy Spirit, dwells in a temple, by the same token the grace of God abides in us and we become temples of the living God. God is called living because he isn’t shut away in heaven and we simply believe in him and accept him, but because he lives within us and we are temples of the living God.

Of course, Saint Paul

didn’t mean that a specific part of our being is a temple of God, but that the whole person is designed to be a temple of God. When we reach this planned destination, then we become temples of the living God. This is why, in the Orthodox Church, there’s great respect and honor for the whole of the human person.

When we honor the saints of the Church, who are people who have proved truly to be temples of the living God, having observed his com-

mandments and found the truth, we don’t merely honor their souls, their teaching or their intellect. We honor the saints as whole beings, because people are sanctified as such, soul and body. This is why, in the Church, we venerate the holy relics of the saints, which are their bones which received the grace of the Holy Spirit and are temples of the living God.

We don’t simply render honor, as did some of our ancestors, but we actually

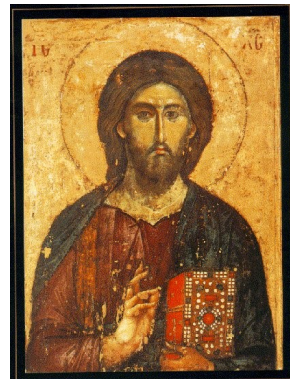
(continued p.2)

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.





Troparion to St. George

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
for our souls
salvation.

News and Notes

We welcome all who are worshipping with us today. Because of COVID-19, our social hour has been canceled until we receive further instructions from the Department of Health.

Pray without ceasing (1 Thess. 5.17)

Please keep the following in your prayers: Esther, Clement John, Mother Onufria, Meg, Larissa, Jack, Stephen, Louise, George, Evan, Ryan, Sandy, Samuel, Anatoly, Alexey, Abraham, Susan, Jenny, Deb, Dan, Bob, Catherine, Skip, Doug, Heidi, Laura, Elizabeth Matthew, Corella, Ron, Daniel, Frankie, Pat, Kathleen, Terena, Loretta, Michael, Bill, the homeless, the hungry, victims of abuse and violence, & those persecuted for their faith in Christ

About the Guarding of the heart

A good man out of the good treasure of the heart brings forth good things; and an evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth evil things (St. Matthew 12:35).

These are the words of the Lord, Who fills the treasury of your heart with His riches.

Who is this "good man?" He who has the good treasure of the heart. Who is this "evil man?" He who has the evil treasure of the heart. *For out of the heart [of an evil man] proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies (St. Matthew 15:19)* and from the good heart proceed *love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance (Galatians 5:22-23).*

Do you see how great a storehouse is the heart of man? Do you see all that can fit in the heart of man? O brother, God the Holy Spirit Himself, when it pleases Him, can fit in the heart of man. He not only can, but He will. He only waits for you to prepare your heart for Him, to turn it into a temple, for God the Holy Spirit will only dwell in a temple. Just as a serpent protects its head, so you, son, guard your heart. Above everything that is guarded, son, guard your heart! For into the heart enters life and from it proceeds life, life from the Living God. O Life-giving Lord, help us to guard our heart for You, for You, the Lord!

The sanctification of the human body, continued from p.1

embrace the relics, the objects and the holy icons of the saints because we believe that, in doing so, we share in the grace of the Holy Spirit which these saints possess. Of course, they didn't have this grace only when they were alive on earth, but have it much more now that they're alive before God. They're still alive and their soul is immortal.

People in the West don't understand this reverence we have for the saints and why we venerate their relics. They now don't understand, even in theory, how it is that human beings can be deified. They think that sanctity is a prize bestowed by God. It isn't a prize given by God; we do, indeed, receive it by divine grace, but as the result of free cooperation between ourselves and God.

People are sanctified as a whole. In the West, sanctity is identified with morality and external legitimacy. This is not the case in the Orthodox Church. Of course the saints are moral and keep the law, but the grace of the Holy Spirit transcends human and

secular features. It's the uncreated energy of God, which envelopes the whole of the human person; the whole person is sanctified.

As is mentioned in the Gospels- and this is a clear answer other Christian



denominations- the woman with the issue of blood went and touched Christ's garments and was cured immediately. Which makes us ask: is it possible for a piece of clothing to work a miracle? Of course not. It was

Christ who performed the miracle. He worked the miracle through his raiment and also, of course, because of the woman's faith.

In the Acts of the Apostles we're told that the shadow of one of them falling on a sick person was enough to effect a cure. Other miracles were worked through their face cloths. Miracles were and are performed through our faith and the grace of the Holy Spirit. Naturally, the saints don't perform miracles on their own. It is the grace of the Holy Spirit which is in objects associated with the saints, acting together with our own faith, which effects the miracles, the healings, and the other characteristic features which the holy relics and icons perform for those who approach them with faith.

Even when Saint Paul talks about sins of the flesh it's because we have a duty to keep our body pure and free of all impurity, all sin. Because this body is designed to be glorified; the whole body is designed to be deified and sanctified.

(Homily on the Sunday of All Saints of America, cont'd from p.1)

service of dying to self—even at the cost of their earthly lives. He called them to put Christ and His Church above all things. Fishing for men was not what the disciples did on the side, it became their whole lives because the love of God compelled them, motivated them, to live life for Christ God and desire that life for others above all else.

Through their communion with God, they grew in love for their fellow man. This is the natural fruit born from growing in relationship with God. By the power of the Holy Spirit outpoured on them, these simple fishermen became great fishers of men, just as Christ said they would—just as we hear in the Prokeimenon for the Feast of Ss. Peter and Paul, the prophetic words of St. David in Psalm 18: “their proclamation went forth into all the earth, and their words to the ends of the world” and at great cost to themselves, they brought the world to the knowledge and love of Christ and His salvation through their witness, their leadership, their martyrdom.

Christ God says, “If anyone desires to be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all” (Mk. 9:35). Our pastors are shepherds, guarding and guiding their flock, loving enough to speak the truth in love and protect the flock from the “wolf of souls.” We see this example today in this time of confusion and change; our church leaders strive to articulate with fresh zeal and relevance the timeless truth of Christ that frees us from the hold that the passions have on us and enables us keep the faith in continuity with the Saints and our forefathers and mothers that have come before us.

The same example of selfless service that we see in the Apostles, we also see in the Saints of America whom we commemorate today. They ‘risked’ their lives as “fishers of men” on this continent to bring the Gospel and the Orthodox Faith, the life in Christ, to this spiritually barren land; all suffered—some even martyrdom just like the Apostles—to preach the timeless truth of Christ to a nation newly born; they reassured their scattered, uncertain flock that it is in their grounding, their identity in Christ in His Church, that they (and we) find our true home—beyond any ethnic or national identities. They didn’t come to make good Russians; they came to make men and wom-

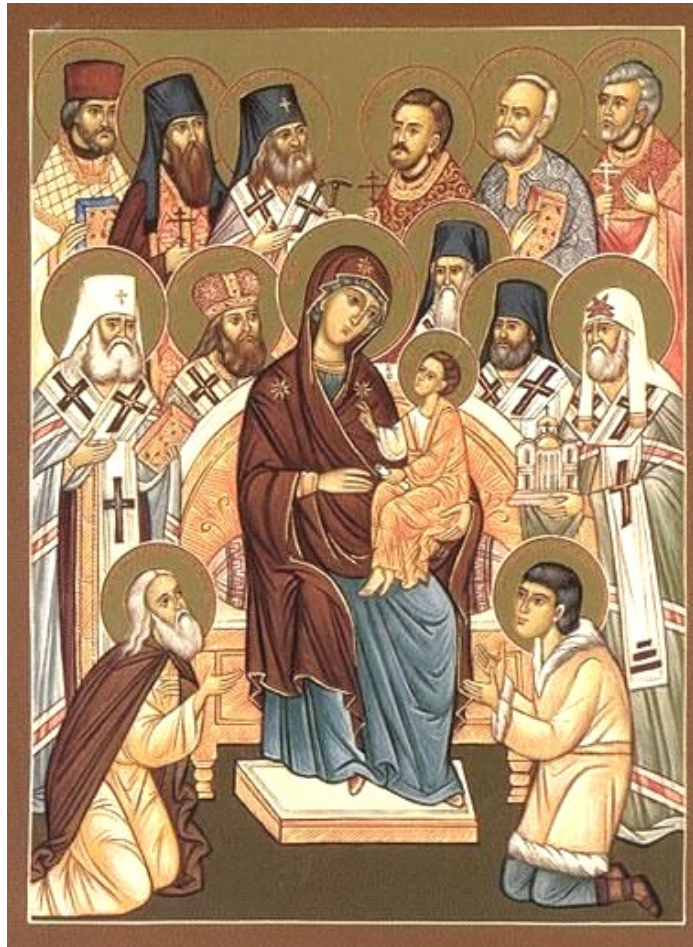
en true Christians, to introduce them to the knowledge and love of God. But two of them went from being missionaries on the frontier to being two of the greatest Patriarch Saints of modern Russia. We celebrate their legacy today and ask for their prayers in our own efforts to share the Gospel and the Orthodox Faith in this dry and thirsty land.

Being “fishers of men” isn’t just a calling for the Apostles and the clergy, but for all baptized Orthodox. By virtue of our Chrismation, we are sealed by the Holy Spirit and empowered to live this life to God’s glory—if we are willing, if we are willing to live out our baptism and serve God, compelled by love for our fellow man and woman.

Christ calls on us in today’s Gospel to be “fishers of men” too, to serve and evangelize in His name (this is what it means to witness and share the Gospel). It’s a common mistake to think that it’s the priest’s responsibility alone to evangelize and witness the faith or it’s the priest’s job alone to be a servant. In reality, the priest is here to equip the people of his flock in discovering, growing, and using their gifts and talents to serve God and build up the Church. But all of us as baptized Orthodox are called to evangelize, to witness to the truth of the love of Christ. This is what it means to be “fishers of men.” St. Tikhon puts it this way, “The spread of Christ’s faith ought to be near and precious to the heart of every Orthodox Christian.”

What motivated the disciples and the Saints of North America to give up so much in order to follow Christ and be ‘fishers of men’? There was no threat in Christ’s call, but simply an invitation. There was no earthly reward, but rather one heavenly and ethereal, and there was certainly a price, a cross, for many, martyrdom for others. What’s clear is that love for God and their fellow man was the primary motivating force at work in their lives, and this love of God compelled them to proclaim the Good News, the Gospel of salvation, to work tirelessly to bring others to that same knowledge and love of God. Our love for God and for one another has to be our motivation too if we are to witness effectively and help change the lives of those around us.

(continued p.4)



Homily-Calling of the Apostles, continued from p.3

As we struggle and strive to live out our faith daily, in our prayers, our repentance, our yes to God and no to sin, our participation in the worship of the Church, our offerings of fellowship with others, the use of our gifts, talents, and treasure, we create an environment where we can come outside ourselves to share Christ's love with others. And this desire grows in us, it humbles us, makes us more like Christ, and enables us in turn to serve even more.

Our life takes on real purpose when we take our Christian faith from inside and reflect it on the outside. St. Theophan asks, "when we come outside ourselves, whom do we meet?" The answer is, God and our neighbor. As fishers of men we witness to the truth of the reclamation, the healing of the human race.

We take what God has done and is doing in our lives [healing us, growing us] and share it with those around us, living out our faith (however imperfectly but sincerely we do so) in witness to the Truth that Christ alone is.

The Scriptures remind us, "perfect love casts out fear." Love is something we can and do grow in; it's the natural outgrowth of our increasing faith in Christ: Like begets like. As we grow, we heal, as we heal, we grow in love and faith. As we grow in faith, we naturally desire to love and serve more.

* *
*

The beginning of quietude is to repel the blows of the demons, because they trouble you to the depths of your heart. The end of quietude is not to fear turmoil, but to be indifferent to it' (Saint John of the Ladder).

Turmoil is a common phenomenon in our life. Untroubled people are often thought to be unfeeling, detached and inward-looking. People who become agitated, however, are deemed to have emotions. They're people who live and strive, even if their agitation brings its own difficulties. But there's an obvious question: what makes us agitated?

In the ascetic tradition of our faith, turmoil is caused by our thoughts. These stem from other people's attitude towards us, from doubt and worry over the future, from fears and phobias, from wanting what we think's ours and which we haven't found, from the misgivings we experience, as well as from the fact that we're unable to find joy

Why are we agitated? By Fr. Themisklotis

and meaning in life.

The devil finds ways to agitate us. He reminds us of what we haven't got or what we'd like to achieve and can't. He makes us look at our world and worry over it. He makes us want to have ourselves and our personal opinions as criteria. He wants us not to depend on those who love us, particularly the Church, but rather to see things on the basis of whatever our mind shows us. As a result, we find no peace.

Our thoughts make us act in a prejudicial way We construct scenarios in our mind. We want our time to be filled and can't imagine ourselves going through life in the tranquil assurance of God and his will. The calmness of prayer and consideration for others, which is a way of asking forgiveness.

When our ego is the key, how do we feel, what do we believe, how can we listen to others? How can we tell what they're saying and what they'd like to say to us? How can love operate? Of all the things we see and hear, what features are true and which ones trap us in endless games of grievance, fear and, in the end, agitation?

Why should we be forever on the defensive, treating other people as our enemies? Even if they do feel that way, might it not be worth a smile, a kind word, a calm approach, a question as to what it is about you that troubles them, expressed patiently? A question to our confessor? A great deal of prayer as the antidote to turmoil?

Life today is filled with tumult. Those who shout most and the loudest, who find the most outrage in every situation feel very satisfied, because, apparently, they're not easily fooled, nor do they submit to

the interests of the world.

People who are truly spiritual, however, entrust themselves to Christ, who was abandoned to the wickedness of the world but overcame it with love and his resurrection. Truly spiritual people exercise judgment, but don't condemn. They remain detached from the tumult because they know that the last word lies with God.

They trust the Church, despite the errors and shortcomings of the people in it, in the knowledge that obedience saves. And they strive spiritually so that at the heart of their relations with other people is the truth which brings peace to the heart; 'we belong to the Lord' [Rom.14, 8].

