

A Voice in the Wilderness

The Newsletter of St. George Orthodox Christian Church



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Glory be to Jesus Christ! Glory be Forever!



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23rd Sunday after Pentecost–The Good Samaritan

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There are some people who think that worshipping God in beautiful liturgical services distracts us from serving our neighbors and accomplishing His purposes for us in the world. There are those who say that focusing on prayer, fasting, and other spiritual disciplines wastes time and energy that could be

better used in helping others. On November 17 we commemorate St John Chrysostom, whose life and ministry demonstrate that we do not have to choose between liturgical life and practical service, for true worship and prayer enable us to make all dimensions of our life in the world an entrance into the heavenly kingdom through Jesus Christ, our eternal High Priest.

St John Chrysostom remains famous for his powerful preaching and interpretation of the Scriptures, his doctrinal and moral soundness, and his association with the Divine Liturgy. Originally from the Church of Antioch, he became the Archbishop of Constantinople, where he imposed needed discipline on the clergy and boldly criticized the abuses of the rich and powerful. He died in exile due to the harsh
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*****23rd Sunday after Pentecost *****
Martyrs Gurias, Samonas, & Abibus

Epistle: Ephesians 2:4-10

Gospel: Luke 10: 25-37

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 Holy Angels and Divine Worship, by Metropolitan Sotirios

On this occasion of the Feast of the Archangels, Angels, Cherubim, Seraphim, and all the Incorporeal Heavenly Powers, let us look at how our life is connected with the holy Angels, which includes the divine worship of our Church.

A hymn of the Church declares: "Through your Cross Christ, a flock made of angels and men, and a Church; heaven and earth rejoice." Our Christ, in His love, united us with the holy Angels through His sacrifice

on the cross. We became one spiritual flock of Christ, His Church, consisting of humanity and the Angels. As a result, it is only natural for the holy Angels to also participate in the divine worship of our Church.

The Angels praise God ceaselessly in Heaven, and also appear at every Altar (the Holy Table) of the church, where the Sacrament of the Divine Eucharist is offered, with Christ Himself present.

In fact, the Priest, during the Small Entrance of

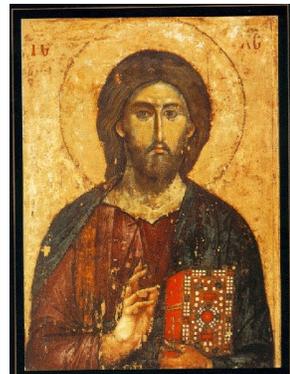
the Divine Liturgy, while holding the holy Gospel, enters the Holy Altar accompanied by the Angels. This is so that they may glorify the All-Merciful God together. And of course the Angels come and stand around the Holy Table to celebrate with the priest, although we do not see them with the physical eye (as they are Spiritual beings).

However, there have been cases where some holy priests and bishops
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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.





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)

We ask that you keep the following in your prayers: Esther, Clement John, Mother Onufria, Olga, Lillian, Meg, Larissa, Stephen, Louise, Marcia, George, Evan, Ryan, Kathleen, Sandy, Samuel, Anatoly, Alexey, Abraham, Susan, Jenny, Deb, Dan, Bob, Catherine, Skip, Doug, Heidi, Bonnalee, Vicky, Corella, Gail, Mike, Ron, Renee, the homeless, the hungry, victims of abuse and violence, & those persecuted for their faith in Christ.

On Being a Christian

What does it mean to be a true Christian—to walk as a committed disciple of Jesus Christ at the dawn of a new millennium of human existence? Once again, the Orthodox Church provides profound answers, based on two thousand years of Spirit-led experience.

In the teaching of the Orthodox Faith, salvation is never limited to a point in time. Salvation is not a one-dimensional event, a past-tense occurrence with merely philosophical or “positional” implications for the present. Rather, as illustrated above, salvation is perceived to be a life-time experience—a journey “not measured by the hours of our watch or the days of the calendar, for it is a journey out of time into eternity.” Like every journey, this journey must have a beginning. And like every journey, this journey continues until it reaches its final destination.

By faith we come to Christ. Through His sacraments we walk with Him daily—hour by hour, moment by moment. And with hope and love we move ahead to that time when we will be eternally in His presence, worshipping with the Angels. As Saint Paul says: “Now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known” (1 Corinthians 13:12).

The Holy Angels and Divine Worship, cont'd from p. 1)

have claimed to see Angels around the Altar and concelebrated with them. These include St. Spyridon (4th century), St. Seraphim of Sarov (18th century), and in our own time St. Iakovos (Tsalikis) and others.

The Divine Liturgy also incorporates the hymns of the Angels, which are mentioned in the Bible or in the Holy Tradition, such as the “Alleluia” that St. John heard the Angels sing in Heaven (Revelations 19:1) which means “Praise God,” and the “Holy, holy, holy Lord Sabaoth; the whole earth is full of His glory” (Isaiah 6:3), which the Prophet Isaiah heard the Seraphim sing around the glorious heavenly throne of God (combined with this hymn is “Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord”—this is the children’s hymn at the triumphant entry of the Lord into Jerusalem, and is sung in the middle of the Holy Anaphora in the Divine Liturgy).

A similar hymn, suggested by an Angel to the Patriarch of Constantinople St. Proclus (434-446), and is

also chanted in every Divine Liturgy (and often elsewhere, such as in opening prayers) is the well-known: “Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Im-



mortal, have mercy on us.” We know it as the Trisagion Hymn, and it refers to the three Persons of the Holy Trinity.

To these angelic hymns that are a part of the Divine Liturgy and other Holy Services, let us conclude with

the hymn of the Angels in Bethlehem, where, on the night of the Nativity of the Lord they sing : “Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace, goodwill toward men” (Luke 2:14).

So in the Divine Liturgy, our own voices are united with countless angelic voices, praising the Triune God. We all celebrate together with the holy Angels! These are the powerful moments we Orthodox experience in the Divine Liturgy, and let no one doubt that. This is clearly seen from the Prayer of Anaphora, when the choir sings the Angelic hymn: “Holy, holy, holy Lord Sabaoth ...”

the Bishop (or Priest) continues the Prayer: “Together with these blessed powers, merciful Master, we also proclaim and say: You are holy and most holy, You and Your only begotten Son and Your Holy Spirit...”

What wonderful things are happening at that time! We are one with the Angels in praising God, and at this moment, the people of God become

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(Homily on Christ performing 2 miracles, cont'd from p.1)

treatment he received for denouncing the corruption of a Byzantine empress. His life of faithfulness was not easy, and his example of holiness shines all the more brightly as a result.

In a society still influenced by pagan traditions that completely disregarded the needs of poor and suffering people, St John stressed the importance of serving Christ in them. Through his preaching and support of philanthropic ministries, he demonstrated that those commonly viewed as worthless and undeserving were those with whom our Lord identified Himself. He taught that, in the face of unmet need, it was impossible to be in communion with Christ without ministering to His hungry and sick body in daily life. He knew that the Lord calls us all to be neighbors to one another, refusing to pass by on the other side when we can be of help in practical ways.

In this respect, our Savior's ministry was clearly made present in St John's life. Christ refused to allow the lawyer to narrow down the list of people whom he had to love as himself in order to find eternal life, and St John proclaimed the same message. Even as today's parable criticizes the religious leaders who passed by on the other side, St John denounced distorted forms of spirituality that separate true faithfulness from how people live in the world, especially in relation to meeting the urgent needs of others.

The character of the good Samaritan is, of course, an image of Christ in many ways. The same religious leaders who rejected and despised Him ignored the true needs of the people before God. Purely out of love for us, Christ came to bind up our wounds as those corrupted by sin and enslaved to death. Out of compassion, He nourishes us back to health with His own Body and Blood and anoints us with holy oil for forgiveness and strength. He makes us members of the Church, the inn where we continue our recovery through His ongoing grace and mercy through the Holy Mysteries. He Himself forgives our sins every time that we humbly repent in Confession. The only limits to our healing are those which we place on ourselves, for there is no boundary to His transforming love for those He created in His image and likeness.

St John was an icon of Christ mostly obviously in presiding as a high priest over the church's celebration of the Divine Liturgy. Our Lord is the true High Priest Who

has ascended into heaven at the right hand of the Father, where He ministers eternally in the Heavenly Temple. We participate mystically in that heavenly worship whenever we celebrate the Divine Liturgy. When we do so, we join ourselves to His one offering through the Cross, by which He conquered death and brought us into the blessed eternal life of the Holy Trinity. In Him, we dine as guests at the Heavenly Banquet when we receive the Eucharist. We truly become participants in and communicants of life eternal in His Body, the Church.

As St John made clear through his preaching and witness, we must never think that worship, offering, and communion are somehow limited to what we do during the liturgical services of the Church. If we limit them in that way, then we will not truly worship Christ, offer

ourselves to Him, or commune with Him for the healing of our souls. If we do so, we will become like the hypocritical religious leaders in today's parable who failed to see that they encounter our Lord in every needy human being, in every neighbor who bears His image and likeness.

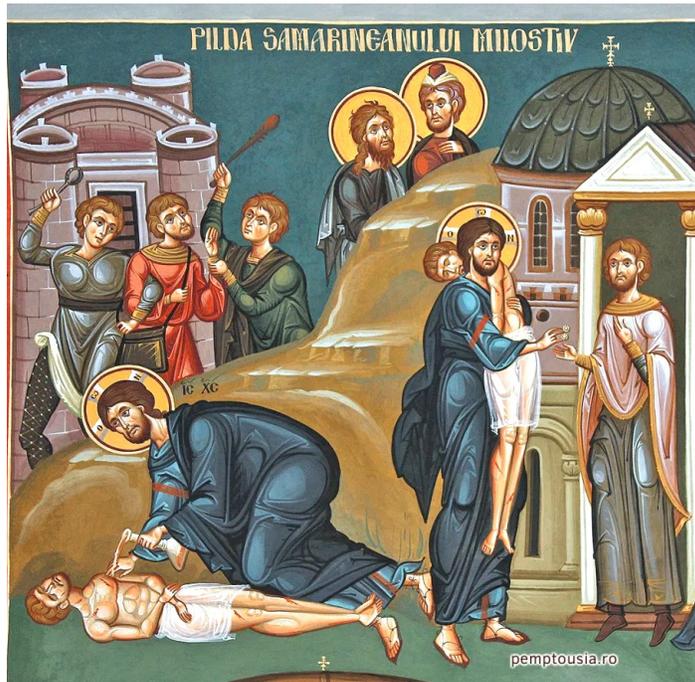
Perhaps they ignored the victim of the robbers because they were hurrying off to fulfill their religious duties in the Temple. Perhaps we do even worse by ignoring the needs of our spouses, children, parents, and neighbors due to our own self-centeredness or obsession with our work, hobbies, or routines. Perhaps we do even

worse by passing by on the other side because we think that people with this or that problem deserve what they get. Perhaps we do even worse by thinking that other people's difficulties are theirs alone and have nothing to do with us. Perhaps we do even worse by becoming so addicted to satisfying our cravings for pleasure that we find it impossible to serve anyone other than ourselves.

By offering Himself on the Cross, rising in glory, and ascending into heaven, our Lord overcame the corruption of the entire creation. He did so as the New Adam Who has made it possible for us all to fulfill our original vocation to become like God, to be perfect as our Heavenly Father is perfect. As the God-Man, He offered every dimension of Himself for our salvation.

Through His eternal High Priesthood, He calls us to ever greater participation in eternal life. While the Eucharistic worship of the Divine Liturgy manifests our communion with Him most profoundly, it should be obvious that so great a salvation may not be limited to any

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Homily on the Good Samaritan, (cont'd p.3)

sphere or segment of our lives. No, if we are truly in communion with Christ, then we must bring every dimension of our lives into right relationship with Him. We must offer not only bread and wine, but all our blessings back to Him so that we will faithfully play our part in making His salvation present in the world. We must join our time, energy, resources, and relationships to His High Priestly offering so that they will all become signs of His healing of our corrupt humanity.

We must offer not only bread and wine, but ourselves to the Holy Trinity in union with Christ. He is the true High Priest through whom we become participants in the eternal worship of the Heavenly Kingdom. Such eternal glory is made present in the Divine Liturgy, but He also calls us to make present His blessing and healing of this broken world in all our thoughts, words, and deeds. He calls us all to become like the good Samaritan, binding up the wounds of our neighbors and refusing to narrow down the list of those whom we must learn to love as ourselves.

We will do so, not by abandoning the services and disciplines of the Church, but by embracing them for our own healing. By repenting of our sins in Confession and communing with Christ in the Eucharist, we will be strengthened to offer ourselves to Him in daily life and to resist any temptation to pass by on the other side of the needs any neighbor. We will gain the spiritual clarity to see that we are always celebrating a liturgy of one kind or another; we are always offering ourselves to something or someone. Like St John Chrysostom, let us worship our great High Priest in how we live in the world each day of our lives.

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(The Holy Angels and Divine Worship-from p.2)

equal with the bodiless and spiritual powers of Heaven. Along with the holy Angels gathered around the Altar of our churches, we kneel together to offer the bloodless sacrifice.

As we have these unique experiences that we live in the holy church, we exclaim: "Staying in the Temple of Your glory, in heaven we believe..." This is why the hymns of the Cherubim prepare us to imitate them in the reverence they present before God: "Let us set aside all the cares of

life that we may receive the King of all, invisibly escorted by the angelic hosts."

My brothers and sisters, in order for us to experience this reality and have it touch our souls, we must have faith, a warm love for Christ, spiritual preparation, a pure heart, and devotion to what is being done during the Divine Liturgy. This is why the Deacon (or Priest) addresses us at critical moments with directions, such as: "Wisdom, Arise"; "Let us stand well"; "Let us stand in awe"; Let us be attentive."

Feeling that the Holy Angels are with us in the Divine Liturgy, may we be motivated by their reverence for God and participate carefully in what is happening. In doing so, we can worship our Holy Lord and God united with the Angels, and in deep gratitude, heartfelt love, and total devotion. Amen.

* * *

Living in Christ Each Day

As an Orthodox Christian, there is an emphasis on acquiring humility and patience, through continual prayer, repentance, and love towards one another. . Through the rapid explosion of technological advances, medical science discoveries, social behavior, humans are lost, drifting far away from God. With all the distractions there are today, it is very easy to be possessed by the physical aspects rather than the spiritual ones.

People would prefer to stay home on a Sunday morning just to sleep-in long enough to watch a football game. Others, tentative about attending Sunday service, give their own children the choice of whether or not they want to attend Sunday School, as an attempt to "skip" church that day. Going to church once a week is

the very least Orthodox Christians can do to practice their faith. It is amazing what one Liturgy service can do to someone. It could be one Gospel or Epistle reading, or even the priest's sermon that can make a difference. As simple phrase or message could be taken from that one-time visit each week to God's House. It all sounds so simple. Yet, why is it so difficult to do?

It is only through our Lord Jesus Christ, that we can be forgiven and allowed access into the Kingdom of God. Beloved you must understand this life is only temporary. Ensure you treat others with dignity and respect, without expecting anything in return. Above all you must love the Lord Jesus Christ with all your heart, mind, and strength.

