

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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20th Sunday after Pentecost—Christ performs two Miracles

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What does it mean to have faith? What do we want from religion? What can we hope for from God? These are the kinds of questions that we tend to overlook because they threaten to take us out of our comfort zones. Many people do not want to think about “the big questions” too much because they can easily make us

uncomfortable and require us to change what we believe and how we live. They call us into question.

In today’s gospel reading, the faith of Jairus and his wife was put to the ultimate test when Jesus Christ said of their daughter, “Do not fear; only believe, and she shall be well...[and] Do not weep; for she is not dead but sleeping.” We do not know exactly what Jairus had believed about the Lord other than that he knelt before Him and asked Him to come to his house, where his daughter was dying. It was one thing to believe that this rabbi had the spiritual power to heal the sick, but probably something quite different to trust that He could raise the dead.

The gospel passage does not quote any of Jairus’ words. It does not tell us explicitly how he and his wife
(continued p. 3)

**** 20th Sunday after Pentecost ****

*** Martyrs Akepsimas and others***

Epistle: Galatians 1:11-19

Gospel: Luke 8: 41-46

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.*

Creating a Christian Home by Abbot Tryphon

Creating a Christian home begins with the icon corner. The “bright corner” becomes the center for every domestic church, and where the family devotions take place. This is also the family’s way of declaring to visitors that this is a Christian home, where Christ is head. Parents should lead the family in prayer.

Each member of the family should have their own patron saint’s icon. A wonderful practice from ancient times is to

have a family icon written so that all their patron saints are represented in the same icon.

The family should try as best they can to have dinner together every night of the week. Watching TV while eating dinner is a very bad idea, for the meal should be the time when the parents can talk to their children about school, or other activities. In these modern times there are almost always school or work related activities that don’t always allow

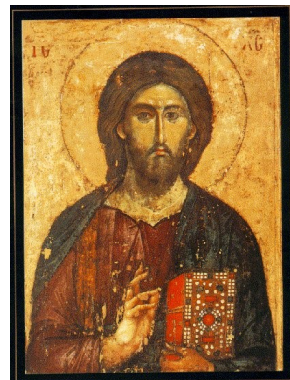
everyone to be together for that all important family meal, but every effort should be made to make this happen as often as possible.

The blessing of the food, with the father or mother making the sign of the cross over the meal with their fingers together as they do when blessing oneself, should be the norm. If we always say a blessing over our food at home and give thanks to God for all He has given us, we are

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 and invite you down to the church hall for our social hour.

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, Peg, Christopher, Jackie, Karoline, Evan, Ryan, Kathleen, Sandy, Andrea, Samuel, Anatoly, Linda, Alexey, Chuck, Eric, Abraham, Susan, Bill, Jenny, Sally Lou, Bob, the homeless, the hungry, victims of abuse and violence, and those persecuted for their faith in Christ.

Words of wisdom from the Elders

The closer we come to the end of our life, the stronger grows our love for the departed. Perhaps it is a premonition of our encounter with them? You think with joy not only of them, but of everything that is connected with them, their belongings, an old Gospel book, an armchair, a trail in the woods, the smell of hay, the sound of church bells. It seems as if nothing which

somehow led a person of God ever dies.

“Everything comes from Him, is made by Him, leads toward Him.” If “all things pre-exist in God, “ as St. Dionysius the Areopagite said, then everything that is good must exist, now and later and forever in God. We shall encounter everything again; all earthly warmth, purified and holy, will embrace us and we shall never be separated from it. We are approaching not a nirvana, but God’s home, where we will find all those who we had learned to love on earth.



Prayer is born of love, and prayer is born of tears. A young girl was asked, “How can I learn to pray?” The young girl responded, “Go and learn to weep and you will learn to pray.”

(Edited from the book, Light in the Darkness, by Sergei Fudel, p. 46)

Creating an Orthodox Home, cont'd from p.1

we are more likely to do so when at school or in a restaurant.

We’ve all seen those bumper stickers that read, “Kill Your TV”. Television and the overuse of the Internet are wreaking havoc on family life. Don’t allow these foreign invaders into your home to replace Christ as head of your household. Bad habits are hard to overcome, so replacing these with communal time in the living room may be hard at first, but is necessary for the basic foundation of any Christian home.

Regular family meetings where everyone has an opportunity to talk about things and where the atmosphere is loving, open and safe, help create trust and a sense of security for everyone. It is natural for parents to argue on occasion, but this should never take place in front of children. They need to feel secure.

Boys need to see their fathers as icons of Christ in the home, demonstrating the biblical image of a husband and father. You men need, for the sake of your children, to give wit-

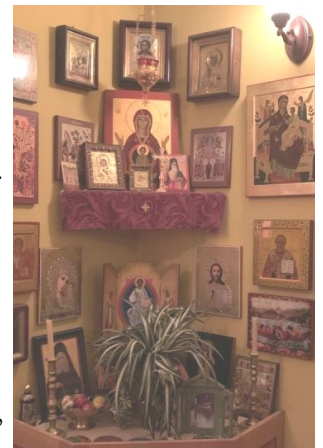
ness to the importance of prayer and church attendance. Statistically, children whose father is a church-goer are far more likely to stay in church as adults. Don’t leave spiritual instruction up to your wives. You will be held accountable before the Throne of God for your children.

Men should not let their wives do all the house cleaning and cooking. In an age where both husband and wife often need to hold down jobs in order to make ends meet, a woman’s work is not just household work. She should not have to come home from work and be expected to do all the housework and cooking by herself. Men need to teach their children by example to help around the house.

Children should be given a small allowance (according to age) so they can learn to manage money, and an important part of money managing is the tithe. The biblical command to give ten percent of one’s income back to God is almost never taught in the Orthodox Church, which is why so many clergy are given such meager

salaries, and parishes have to hold church festivals. When we fail to tithe we are stealing from God! A child who tithes ten percent of his allowance will grow into an adult Orthodox Christian who tithes.

These are basic suggestions for creating an Orthodox home. If you begin to implement these suggestions, the Lord will reward you with a family that stands strong and your children will grow up as spiritually healthy Christians, grounded in biblical teachings and moral fortitude. Your grandchildren will, in return, be raised with the same biblical principles and you will be the most blessed grandparents on your block!



responded to the Lord's challenge to believe that she would be returned to life and health. These events probably rocked them to the depths of their souls. Perhaps they could not find the words to respond to what was going on in that moment. But they had enough faith to go into their house with the One Who had promised to save their daughter if they believed and did not fear. Even though the mourning and weeping had already begun, they offered Him the faith of which they were capable at that moment. Their trust enabled them to receive a miracle well beyond all reasonable expectations.

The same is true of the woman who had been bleeding for twelve years. She had spent all her money paying physicians who could not help her. Her malady was medically incurable at that time, and also made her ritually and socially unclean. The passage does not tell us just what she believed about Christ, but only that she reached out and touched the hem of His garment in a crowd so large that she hoped she could do so without drawing attention to herself. She must have had some level of faith that even that small gesture would open her to receive healing through Him.

That is what happened, but when the Lord announced that someone had touched Him, she knew that her secret was out. That is when she "came trembling, and falling down before Him declared in the presence of all the people why she had touched Him, and how she had been immediately healed." When she openly confessed what Christ had done for her, He said, "Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace."

Both the bleeding woman and Jairus faced circumstances so dark that they could not reasonably expect to be delivered from them. In the usual course of events, incurable chronic disease and death cannot be overcome. That these challenges were so profound is reflected by the fact that these characters speak so little in this passage. They did not use words to state clearly what they believed about Christ. The woman did not say anything until after she had been healed, which came through the only gesture of faith that she had the strength to make: secretly touching the hem of the Savior's garment. And once she was healed, she spoke only after she had been found out.

Though Jairus had asked Christ to come to his house where his daughter was dying, our gospel passage does

not record him asking for her to be raised after her death. He and his wife probably struggled in stunned silence to believe that the Lord could fulfill such an astounding promise.

It is often difficult, if not impossible, to put into words our deepest fears, hopes, and loves. There are so many dimensions of life that are too profound for precise definitions. All the more is that the case for God, the infinitely holy "I AM" Who is beyond our knowledge and control. Orthodox theology teaches that we are completely ignorant of God's essence, but know God as He has revealed Himself to us in His divine energies. While we may use words to make true statements about God, genuine spiritual knowledge requires participation in His life. That participation requires faith in the sense of

opening and offering ourselves to Him from the depths of our souls. That kind of participation transforms us into "partakers of the divine nature" by grace as we become more like God in holiness.

Jairus and the bleeding woman remind us by their examples that we need a faith much deeper than words, ideas, or feelings. To become "a new creation" in Christ, we must reach out to Him as best we can for the healing of our chronic and seemingly incurable diseases of soul and body. Even when all seems lost for us or our loved ones, we must struggle to obey the command: "Do not fear; only believe."



We will probably lack the words to describe how the Lord is present and what He is doing in our darkest moments. Faith does not require complete rational comprehension; if it did, we would not call it faith. At the end of the day, faith is about uniting ourselves to Christ in His great Self-Offering on the cross. He did not conquer sin and death with ideas or words, but by offering up Himself purely out of love. If we are becoming "a new creation" in Him, then our lives must be characterized by sacrificial, trusting obedience from the depths of our souls, especially when despair seems to make much more sense than hope in the world as we know it.

The clearer our spiritual vision becomes, the more we will see that faith requires something much deeper than knowing the right words or following the rules. It requires the humble trust. The Lord accepted the secret touch of the bleeding woman and the stunned obedience of Jairus. And He will accept our faith also, if we simply do what we can to entrust our lives to Him from the depths of our souls and leave the rest in His hands.

The Saints of North America (part 17)

With true pastoral inspiration combined together with sober, practical record-keeping, Fr. John managed the construction of the new church, which was finished in 1903, requiring a very significant sum of money for that time, fifty thousand dollars. The consecration of the new temple, which was named in honor of the Holy Trinity, was performed by Bishop Tikhon, and it became a real festivity for the whole of the Russian Orthodox diocese in North America. Two years later, in greeting Fr. John on the occasion of his first ten years of service as a priest in the Church, the highest praise went to his careful pastoral labors in the construction of the Holy Trinity Church, which had become one of the most remarkable Orthodox churches in America: “The year has been filled with the most vivid of impressions, sometimes agonizing, sometimes good.

A year of endlessly trying fund-raising in Russia, a year of sleepless nights, worn-out nerves, and countless woes — and here is the testimonial of your care: a temple made with hands, in the image of a magnificent Russian Orthodox temple, shining with its crosses in Chicago, and the peace and love not made with hands that are springing up in the hearts of your flock!” For his inspiring labors, Fr. John, thanks to the intercession of Bishop Tikhon, was awarded the Order of Saint Anna of the Third Degree, on May 6, 1903.

Zealously fulfilling his numerous obligations as a parish priest, he was the only priest there during the first nine years of his service in the parishes of Chicago and Streator. At the same time, Fr. John continued to participate actively in resolving various issues in the life of the North American diocese. In February 1904, Fr. John was assigned as a chairman of the Censor Committee of the Diocese of Alaska and the Aleutians, where he had already participated as a member of the council for seven years.

In June 1905, he was an active participant in the preparatory meetings of diocesan clergy, held in Old Forge, PA. under the guidance of Bishop Tikhon, where issues were discussed in connection with preparation for the first Council in the history of the Diocese of North America and the Aleutians. It was in the solemn atmosphere of the sessions of this Council, on July 20, 1905, that Fr. John’s first decade of priestly service was celebrated, the actual date of the anniversary being August 27.

In Saint Michael’s Church in Old Forge, before a large group of diocesan clergy presided over by the Most Reverend Raphael, Bishop of Brooklyn, Fr. John was awarded a gold pectoral cross, and the speeches offered a perceptive and thoroughly objective description of the whole period of Fr. John’s pastoral service in North America. “Directly after your study at seminary, having left the motherland, you came to this strange land to expend all your youthful energy, to devote all your strength and inspiration for that holy concern to which you were attracted in your vocation.

A hard legacy was left for you: the church in Chicago

was located then in an untidy church setting, in a wet, half-ruined building, the parish with its loosely defined parish membership scattered over the huge city with a heterodox population torn asunder by the wild beasts — all that could fill the soul of a young laborer with great confusion, but you bravely accepted the task of selecting a precious spark from the pile of rubbish, to fan the sacred fire into a small group of faithful!

You were forgetful of yourself: calamities, illnesses, the poor location of your house, with its ramshackle walls, floors, and cracks that gave open access to the outer elements, with destructive effects on your health, and the health of your family members.... Your babies were sick, your wife was not quite healthy, and bitter bouts of rheumatism seemed to wish to destroy your

confidence, to exhaust your energy.... We greet you, remembering another of your good deeds, we have in mind here your sacrificial service in the office of Chairman of our beloved Mutual Aid Society, in the office of Censor to our enlightening missionary publishing house, and in spreading wide our evangelical efforts — organizing the parishes in Madison, IL, and Hartshorne, OK.

The remoteness of your parish in Chicago has torn you from your bonds with your colleagues in America, depriving you during these years of the chance to see your brother-pastors ... You were bereft of that which for the majority of us adorns the missionary service through which we pass. How touching, and how great a degree of isolation was yours, is witnessed by the fact that you had to baptize your children yourself, because of the absence of the other priests around you ... Let this Holy Cross we present serve you as a sign of our brotherly love.

(continued next issue)

