

A Voice in the Wilderness

The Newsletter of St. George Orthodox Christian Church



Rev. Matthew P. Binkewicz, Pastor

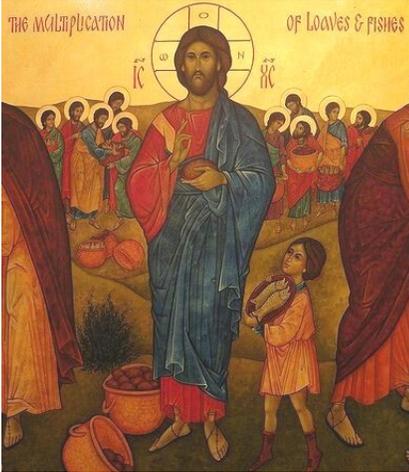
Glory be to Jesus Christ! Glory be Forever!



Volume 9 Issue 423

8th Sunday after Pentecost-Christ feeds the 5000

Sunday, August 2, 2020



Today's Gospel from Matthew 14 tells us about Christ feeding the multitudes – 5000 men plus the women and children. The Fathers teach that the formula is always the same, Christ gives thanks to His Father – representing the Anaphora prayers; breaks the bread – representing His body, the Eucharist; gives it to His disciples to dis-

tribute – representing the Priests distributing communion at the Chalice at each Liturgy – and the people are filled – unto eternal life!

You don't generally hear the prayer that the Priest says at the Altar as he breaks the lamb into the 4 main pieces for communion, as the communion hymns are already underway, but it is: *"Divided and distributed is the Lamb of God: Who is divided, yet not disunited; Who is ever eaten, yet never consumed; but sanctifying those who partake thereof."* After all had eaten from the 5 loaves and 2 fish in today's gospel account, there are taken up 12 baskets full, one for each of the 12 apostles; and these baskets have been passed down from the apostles into the hands of the bishops and priests in every generation and remain ever full – ever eaten yet never consumed!

(continued p. 3)

*****8th Sunday after Pentecost *****

Relics of St. Stephen the Martyr

Epistle: 1 Corinthians 1: 10-18

Gospel: Matthew 14: 14-22

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.

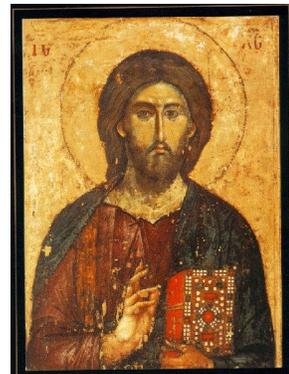
We worship God in Trinity - Father+Son+Holy Spirit.

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.*

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.



The Jesus Prayer by Metropolitan Ioil of Edessa

"Have mercy upon us, Son of David." Many miracles have occurred through the invocation of the name of Christ. As He went towards His passion, He said: 'Whatever you ask in my name, I will do' (Jn. 14, 13). Equally, when He ascended into the heavens and gave His final admonitions to His disciples, He again stressed: 'In my name they will cast out demons, and they will speak new tongues.' (Mark 16, 17).

The Apostles performed

miracles in the name of Christ. This really did happen. The Apostles Peter and John cured a lame man who was sitting outside the temple by calling upon the name of Jesus Christ (Acts 3, 6). Let's examine in simple terms the name of our Lord.

The name of the Lord Jesus

In Matthew 9, 27-35, we hear about the two blind men who called upon the name of the Lord and asked Him to have mercy on them.

Saint John Chrysostom says that they didn't simply go to meet him but 'shouted loudly and required nothing else of Him but that He show mercy'. The sweet name of Christ isn't human, but divine and celestial. It wasn't given to Him by human beings, but by His heavenly Father (Matt. 1, 21). It's the delightful object of study of our mind, tongue and heart. Saint Nikodemus the Athonite refers to a Christian who died on

(continued p.2)



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 worshiping 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, Lorraine, Evan, Ryan, Kathleen, Sandy, Samuel, Anatoly, Alexey, Abraham, Susan, Jenny, Deb, Dan, Bob, Catherine, Skip, Doug, Heidi, Bonnalee, Vicky, Corella, Gail, Mike, the homeless, the hungry, victims of abuse and violence, & those persecuted for their faith in Christ.

In God's Hands-Archimandrite Symeon

It is one thing to say, "What's going to be with this world? Where are things going? What is going to happen to us?" And it is totally another, to turn all that happens into motivation to run to Christ. "My Lord, I believe that you run and govern the world, that you know everything, that you

give grace and save. So I come to you begging to take away this mood, this sadness for current problems which weigh heavy on my shoulders and give me pain. I let everything rest in your hands, my God".

It is one thing taking such an attitude that brings peace and divine consolation into you, and it is another saying the same words in agony. The latter is, ultimately, lack of trust in God's providence and goodness. When we are ready and mature, God will deprive us of nothing.

The Talents God Give us.

It is God who gives five talents, two talents or only one talent to people. God doesn't judge things by human standards: some person is better than somebody else, some other person is not as good, and a third person isn't good at all. What God wants from us is to hold on to this: whatever was done by God, was for our best, for our salvation. In other words, God having foreseen that, if you possessed more abilities you would be lost out of pride, He economizes things in this way, so that you are finally saved.

The Jesus Prayer, (cont'd from p. 1)

Christ's tomb, calling out 'Jesus Christ, sweet love'.

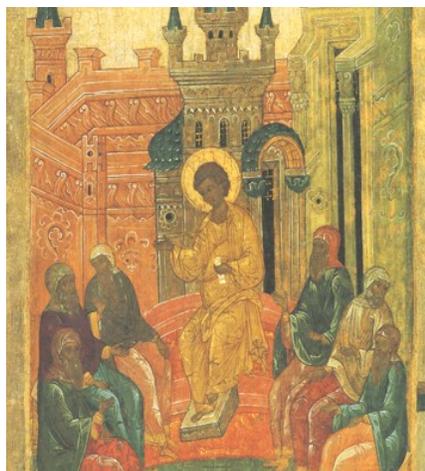
It's true that Christ's energies are manifested through nouns: 'Sophia' (Wisdom), 'Irene' (Peace), 'Hara' (Joy), 'Kyrios' (Lord), 'Basileus' (Basileus, King), 'Theos' (God) and so on. Our faith isn't abstract but is directed towards a particular person, Who has a name and is alive, Who can love and enter into communication with other people. This person is Jesus Christ. He entered into communication with us, loved us, became a human being similar in person to us.

His name is linked to our salvation. The Apostles told the leaders of Israel that we will find our salvation beneath this name. The name Jesus is inexhaustible riches. It's ontologically associated with Him. It's a conduit through which grace flows to us and fills our whole being with the presence of God. It gives us life and strength.

The Jesus Prayer

The invocation of the two blind

men, 'Have mercy on us, Son of David' is a variation of the well-known prayer 'Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy upon us', which we



usually call 'the Jesus Prayer'. This prayer wasn't discovered by monks, but, as we saw above, it was a prayer recommended by Jesus and was used by the Apostles. It's a scourge against the demons. Saint John of the Ladder writes: 'Flay the enemy in the name of Jesus'. The prayer conceals within it the mystery of the Holy Trinity.

Jesus is the Son of the Father, and mercy and grace come to us through the Holy Spirit. To those who say it continually, the prayer of Jesus' name gives strength, vigilance, clarity of mind, the grace of life-giving tears, love for our brothers and sisters, desire for our salvation and, in general, a connection between us and God.

The use of the prayer

If the Jesus prayer is to bear fruit, we must humble ourselves and love Christ. An Athosite monk used to say that, when we say 'Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy upon us', we should emphasize the verb phrase, 'have mercy upon us,' as was the case in the instance of the blind men. We must humble ourselves, weep over our sins, acknowledge God's priority in our life and then we'll bear an abundant harvest within us. The words spoken by the blind men are a fervent prayer. They said 'Lord Jesus Christ have mercy upon us', and they found a boundless ocean of salvation. Let us also pray thus, intensely, so that God may have mercy upon us.

We gather together at the Divine Liturgy to partake of the greatest miracle of all, the miracle of the undivided body and blood of Christ God, ever eaten yet never consumed. There is nothing whatsoever we could ever possibly accomplish that would be more important than what we are about to receive here at the chalice. Life itself and not just life but everlasting life that continues to grow, bringing us ever increasingly into the abundance that is God's kingdom. The fathers call this the "Medicine of Immortality."

This miracle of the feeding of thousands with the bread from Christ is told by all 4 of the Gospel writers, and in John chapter 6 Christ explains the true significance. Yes, this was one of the signs of the Messiah, and all that Christ did was to fulfill and complete all that had been written of the Him, of the Messiah in the Law of Moses, the Psalms and the Prophets. But more than that, Christ explains the Eucharist in very clear and unambiguous terms. John Chapter 6 starts with the feeding of the 5000 but ends with Christ instructing the Jewish authorities by saying, (John 6:48,51-56) *"I am the bread of life...I am the living bread which comes down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread that I shall give is my flesh, which I give for the life of the world."*

We need to be coming to the chalice at every opportunity, this is life! If there is anything standing between us going to receive communion, we should waste no time in coming for confession and receiving forgiveness. Never stay away from the chalice twice in a row unless specifically instructed to do so by your Priest, but come to confession and deal with the reason you never came the first time. Do not let your grudges, and unforgiveness deprive you of life. Why would you deliberately choose to excommunicate yourself, cut yourself off from the body of Christ, from your brothers and sisters, from the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, from this most precious gift of God's saving and life transforming grace?

The Divine Liturgy is leading us in thanksgiving and worship to receive the body and blood and be united with the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. The prayers assume that we are here to be communicants, to partake, not to listen and be spectators. We are being united with the entire Church, the Bride of Christ, both

those here, and with the millions of those who have completed their earthly journey and are cheering us on from heaven to be vigilant and join them. Millions more of those who are all around the world today are sharing in the cup with us. We are joining in communion with the entire Church visible and the invisible bodiless powers and saints.

We ask the Lord to *"Send down Your Holy Spirit upon us and upon these gifts here offered and Make this bread the precious Body of Your Christ, and that which is in this cup the precious Blood of Your Christ. Making the change by Your Holy Spirit. That they may be to those who partake for the purification of soul, for the remission of sins, for the communion of Your Holy Spirit, for the fulfilment of the Kingdom of Heaven, for boldness towards You, and not for judgement or condemnation."*

This is life, this is what is of eternal and ultimate importance and dwarfs all other activities in our lives. All of the holy fathers and mothers of the Church throughout all the ages have valued the receiving of the body and blood of Christ as the most important and life changing activity we can participate in. Saints Basil, Chrysostom, and Simeon, all talk about the purifying fire, the deifying grace and the transforming action of communion in their communion prayers.

Of course we need to prepare, this is always the most important activity we will do all week. Nothing else that we humans can participate in comes close to this. We need

to *"make peace with those who have grieved us. Only then may we dare to eat the Mystical Food."*

We should begin to shift our focus on Saturday evening. Avoid movies, TV, or even books with violence or disturbing themes. Read or watch something spiritually healthy or visit with good friends. Fast from at least midnight unless you have a health concern. (Our younger children are obviously exempt). In the morning, focus on the great miracle you are about to participate in and prepare by praying or listening to the pre-communion prayers given us by the Church to prepare us to receive this great mystery. Our preparations and awe will instill in our children that this is a most special and sacred event and they should be given age appropriate instructions that they too may begin to appreciate this great blessing.



There is no Life without Faith by Archimandrite Touma (Bitar) (part 3)

As for Jairus, the head of the synagogue, he had an only daughter who was twelve years old. Despite the fact that he was head of the synagogue— that is, an honored person with a station among people— out of his pain over his daughter, he came and prostrated at Jesus' feet. This is great humility for a person important in his nation to be humble before a teacher. From where did the head of the synagogue have this humility? He had it from suffering. He was grieving for his daughter and she was at death's door. That is, she was probably seriously ill. She was suffering and he was suffering with her. Notice what the Lord Jesus says to Jairus when He goes to his house, "Do not fear. Only believe and she is healed." These are very great words.

First, He told him that he was subject to fear and this is from human weakness. At the same time, He touched his heart so that he would not surrender to fear, then He told him, "Only believe, and she will be healed." This means that if someone is a believer, the effects of his faith are not limited to his own person, but extend to others too! The girl did not rise from the dead from her own faith, but by the faith of her father.

So we are capable, by the grace of God, to benefit not only ourselves but also others, if we are believers in Jesus and if they are prepared and ready, exactly like what happened with that paralytic who was brought on a bed by four men. They lowered him through the roof in front of Jesus and when the Lord saw their faith, He said to the paralytic, "Your sins are forgiven." Then, after that, He told him, "Arise, carry your bed, and go to your house." For this reason prayer, which is an act of faith par excellence, is what benefits the world more than anything else, so long as the world is ready to accept the grace of God which comes into the world through us, through our faith and through our prayer. Therefore, we pray for the peace of the whole world!

So let no one think that he is separated from others. This isn't true. All people are tied to each other. There is a big family, which is the family of the world, and there is a small family. But for God, there are no individuals. One who thinks that he can be saved alone has no share in salvation. For this reason, each one of us must strive for the

salvation of others and seek for them, because faith in itself is individual faith, but within the communion of the family of humanity— and especially the family of believers who accept the Lord Jesus and walk with Him in integrity and uprightness.

Today, the trend is toward the individualization of humankind: each for himself! Therefore each person becomes more and more an island unto himself. Even within a single house, the father comes to be alone, the mother alone and each of the children alone. The important thing for us to know is that this individualism kills man and kills faith in God and any relationship with Him. We must once more overlap with each other. When the Lord asked

Cain, "Where is your brother?" He said to Him, "Am I my brother's keeper?" The Lord God didn't answer him, but He answered us indirectly because He made us all keepers of each other. We are all responsible for each other.

Absolutely no one can say that he is responsible for himself and not responsible for anyone else. This is talk from the evil one! In Christ, we say something else: "I am responsible for myself, so I am responsible for all of you. The salvation of each one of you is my concern." For this reason, when a monk comes to a monastery, he doesn't pray only for himself, but rather prays for the world. This is why people rush to monasteries and ask the monks for prayer, because the monks' concern is to bear the world and to lift it up to the Lord God with sighing, tears and brokenness of heart. They are the people whose fundamental concern is



the salvation of humanity.

So we make a true contribution to each others' salvation. Those who do not work for others' salvation have no salvation to be cut from the Book of Life. For this reason, faith, the faith of one person, benefits all humanity! One must go out and be concerned for others in order to find oneself. Saint Maximus the Confessor clearly and frankly states that what a person receives from this earth is what he has given to others. So as long as we care for one another, we have truly realized our own salvation. Faith, then, is an act of love that binds us to all humanity because it binds us in trust and certainty, in great love for the Lord Jesus.