

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!



Volume 9 Issue 431

16th Sunday after Pentecost— Christ calls His Disciples

Sunday, September 27, 2020



I am sure that every one of us has felt at some point in our lives just like the frustrated fishermen did when Jesus Christ found them washing their nets. They had fished all night and caught nothing at all. As happens so often in our own lives, things had not turned out as they had hoped despite their best efforts. They were disappointed and frustrated to the point of

giving up. But then the Lord told them to get back to work and let down their net. They did so and somehow caught so many fish that their net was breaking; then they hauled in so many fish that their weight almost sank two boats.

That must have been quite a scene, and it was so astonishing that St. Peter recognized this tremendous abundance as a miracle. He fell down before Christ and said, “Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!” But the Lord responded said, “Do not be afraid. From now on you will catch men.” Then the disciples left behind their boats and nets and followed Jesus Christ.

The day probably began like any other day in the family fishing business that they had always known. The men were busy with their work and
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16th Sunday after Pentecost

*** Martyr Callistratus ***

Epistle: 2 Corinthians 6:1-10

Gospel: Luke 5: 1-11

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.*

Time and the Church, Part 2, by Professor George Mantzaridis

Like its beginning, the end of the world cannot be pinpointed at a particular moment in time. The beginning and end of the world are conceived by people only in relation to their conventional position in time. So although they are not subjective phenomena, they are inevitably associated with the subjective position of humankind in history and, as the will of God, are beyond our comprehension.

It would therefore be more correct to talk not

of the end of the world, but of the mystery of the end of the world, which will also be the mystery of the end of time. We should also speak in the same way of the mystery of the beginning of the world, which is also the mystery of the beginning of time.

Before time, and after time, there is eternity and perpetuity, which are beyond time (Cf. Basil the Great, *On the Hexameron*, 1, 5). Time acquires meaning because it is linked to eternity and

perpetuity. It becomes real history because it is united to eschatology. History makes no sense without some sort of ending. And after the advent of Christ, the end of history exists in every one of its moments.

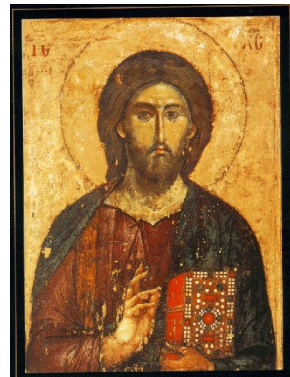
So, for the Church, the meaning of history lies in the boundless depths of each of its moments, not in the external alterations of the flow of time. In the Church the length of time acquires value when compared to its depth.

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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 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, Ron, the homeless, the hungry, victims of abuse and violence, & those persecuted for their faith in Christ.

Words from St. John of Kronstadt

In Holy Scriptures we see God face to face, and ourselves as we are. Man, know thyself through them and walk always as in the presence of God.

To what end do fasting and penitence lead? For what purpose is the trouble

take? They lead to the cleansing of the soul from sins, to peace of heart, to union with God, they fill us with devotion and sonship, and give us boldness before God.

+ + +

The loving Lord is ever-present: how can I let even a shadow of evil enter into my heart? Let all evil completely die within me; let my heart be anointed with the sweet fragrance of goodness as with a balsam. Let God's love conquer you, evil Satan.

+ + +

When praying, we must absolutely subject our heart to our will, and turn it toward God. Our heart must not be cold, crafty, untruthful or double-minded. The heart is the principal aspect of the human person. One who does not pray or serve God with his heart does not pray at all because only his body prays, and the body without the mind is nothing more than mere dust. Therefore your prayer ought to be in body and mind—all spirit and understanding.

Holy Father John, Pray to God for us.

Time and the Church, cont'd from p. 1)

And the depth of the time and of history offer the only substantial justification of their length.

Limiting time to a one-dimensional movement inevitably leads to disenchantment and disappointment. The history of civilizations is one of disenchantments. Even what we call Christian civilization, as a human creation in the straight line of historical time, shares the same fate. But what the Church offers is an exit from the secular cul-de-sac. It is a transfer from the pointless temporal flow and maelstrom into the fullness of divine love and life.

Secular space and secular time are linked to love of the world. But they are transformed into positive factors when they are used as starting points for entry into the truth of eternal life. As Saint Basil the Great observes, this present life is, to all intents and purposes, death. The life that Christ calls people to is different. It is the life which is not subject to the deviousness of the world and the disenchantment of death. It is the life

which transforms people and places them beyond human capabilities and perspectives. It is the life of the kingdom of God, which is manifested in



the Church of Christ and is offered to people here and now.

Christians are called upon to use their time well and to invest it in the prospect of eternal life. The relativity and incongruity of the present life are not negative circumstances or mere episodes, but opportunities for a transferal 'from action and instability

to solidity and immobility' (Gregory the Theologian, *Discourse* 7,19). In this perspective, everyone finds their place and their validation. Nothing is abandoned. Nothing is ignored nor is it treated as coincidental. God is the Lord of the world and of history, the All-Observant and All-Powerful. Joy and pain, success and failure, progress and catastrophe are not mutually destructive but are offered as means of personal completion, for the overall richness of our lives, a process which is realized in the Church.

The Church does not abhor time, but is manifested within time. It neither mourns what is past, nor worries about that which is to come. The close of the day which has passed is the beginning of the day to come. And while people may be concerned about what they have lost or be glad over what awaits them, while they may be sad about the past or fearful of the future, the Church calls upon them, steadfastly and calmly, to proceed along a path which has been entrusted to the hands of God.

did not expect anything unusual to happen. Over the years, there had surely been many times before when they had caught nothing. So it was time to wash their nets and hope for the best the next time. But in the midst of their disappointment and resignation, the Lord blessed them in a way that helped them see their lives, and calling in life, in a new way. Their work would no longer be catching fish, but bringing people into the eternal life of the Kingdom of God.

The details are different, but Jesus Christ says something very similar to us all. No matter what we do every day, no matter how satisfied or disappointed we may be with our circumstances, the Lord invites us to participate in bringing the blessings of His Kingdom to the world and all its inhabitants.

Of course, the disciples were called to a special ministry in the founding of the Church; they had to leave their old occupations and serve the Lord full-time as evangelists, apostles, bishops, and ultimately as martyrs. Some continue to hear similar callings to this day. But most of us will remain right where we are for the foreseeable future, in the familiar circumstances of our families, neighborhoods, workplaces, and schools with all their strengths and weaknesses.

Familiarity often breeds contempt, and we may be tempted to think that because we do not have our “dream job” or live in a setting more to our liking that we are somehow failures. When we think in those ways, we forget that the measure of our lives is not in success according to the standards of the world or even to our own preferences. The fishermen did not expect a miraculous haul or a new calling in the midst of their frustration. We cannot place limits on what God is doing through us and with us even when we are disappointed, frustrated, and unfulfilled.

Likewise, we may think that really holy people are all in monasteries, seminaries, and mission fields, not in the mundane circumstances in which we find ourselves. We may doubt that what we do each day could be truly pleasing to God and what we are really called to do. We must remember, however, that every bit of our life and work is called to become holy. Everything that we do provides an opportunity to be stewards of God’s creation and to offer our lives and the fruits of our labor to the

Lord for blessing and fulfillment.

For Jesus Christ is present to us in every human being whom we encounter at work, school, or elsewhere since we all bear His image and likeness. Every human being and the entire creation are called to shine with the light of our Lord’s glory. In our daily lives, we are all to become priests who offer the world back to God for His blessing. We are all to become iconographers who bring out the beauty of the creation so that it manifests the life of our Lord, so that it becomes an image of His Kingdom.

In order for us to accept this high calling, we must learn from St. Paul about how to work every day. We need to obey his teaching to “Watch, stand fast in the faith, be brave, be strong. Let all that you do be done with love.” Some have claimed that Christianity is a religion for the weak, for wimps who want to feel better about being the doormats and losers of life. But those who take up their crosses and follow Jesus Christ know that this is not a way for the weak and timid, but for those who boldly step out in faith to resist the temptation to do what is easy and popular and satisfies our self-centered desires.

In contrast, the true Christian life requires discipline, self-sacrifice, and the sort of dogged commitment characteristic of athletes, soldiers, and others who do the hard work of sacrificing for a good higher than themselves. Opportunities to grow in this kind of life are available to us all in whatever set of circumstances we face today.

Some care for the sick and troubled; some take on the great burdens of defending our nation or protecting us from crime; some provide jobs by running a business or provide goods and services that people need in order to live a decent life; others teach; some take care of a home or a family; some go to school; and some are retired. At times, we all get discouraged and frustrated; we have conflicts with others or feel neglected or mistreated by them. At times we may wonder if there is any point at all to what we do every day. When we feel this way, we must remember that the Son of God has entered into our world and blessed every bit of it. He wants to sanctify every human being, every relationship, every responsibility, task, and assignment that we have—and every
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Homily on Christ calling His Disciples, cont'd p.3

that we speak. Nothing is foreign to Him; nothing is outside of His love and salvation.

When we live and work faithfully in our present circumstances, we have the opportunity to transform a portion—no matter how small—of God's good creation for His glory. And we are reminded that salvation is not a matter of the spiritual experience of isolated individuals, for we all journey together toward a new heaven and a new earth. Jesus Christ's ministry of feeding the hungry, healing the sick, restoring sight to the blind, and proclaiming good news to the poor shows that His salvation concerns the real-life challenges that people continue to face in the world as we know it. He showed God's love for the hated Gentiles and Samaritans, for people who had fallen into great sin and were shunned by respectable people. In His Church, all peoples and nations are to be reconciled and united in the life of the Kingdom.

Whether we see it or not, the circumstances we face each day provide an opportunity to play a role in bringing salvation to the world and all its inhabitants. Everything that we do and say at work, school, or among family and friends should be sign of God's blessing to those we encounter. We all have the opportunity to forgive; to work toward reconciliation with those from whom we have become estranged; and not to let greed, ambition, or power get in the way of relating to others with honesty, kindness, and decency.

Our calling is to use the challenges and blessings of our daily grind to grow in holiness as we play our role in making this world an icon of God's salvation. That's how we will become fishers of men in our daily work. For salvation is not an escape from the world, but its fulfillment. Spirituality is not about separating ourselves from others, but about serving one another in Christ-like humility.

Human labor has fashioned wheat into bread and grapes into wine. By the power of the Holy Spirit, they will soon become the Body and Blood of Christ, our salvation, our Communion with the Holy Trinity. The same will be true of our daily life and work in the world when we offer ourselves and all our labors to Him. Then like the first disciples, we will move from frustration to amazement at God's blessing to become fishers of men.

* * *

We hear it so often in our services. It seems like hundreds of times we hear "Lord have mercy" Some people have even been heard to say, "Why do we repeat our-

Lord Have Mercy! Why do we need to repeat this?

selves so much? Didn't God hear us the first time? What are we praying for that we say it over and over again? Let's take a closer look, starting with the litany that begins most of our services: the Great Litany.

The first thing we say (or actually, the deacon or priest says for us all) is "IN PEACE, let us pray to the Lord:" When we enter the Church to be with Christ, to pray and worship Him, it is the time to be at peace, to find peace. And if you had a hectic time just getting to church, this petition should help stop you in your frantic tracks. It is a reminder to change gears and regroup as we come into God's presence.

As the next petition confirms, asking for "the peace from above, and for the salvation of our souls." Christ taught us that he came to give us HIS peace, which is not of this world, the kind that will endure all the trials and tribulations this world can give. His peace places us in the eye of life's hurricane, so that no matter how much of a whirlwind is around us every day we have God's peace within us. That's what we are praying for first of all, and we need to do it every time we gather to pray.

Once we have centered ourselves in Christ, we ask for "the peace of the whole world, for the good estate of the holy churches of God, and for the union of all ..." We don't look for God's peace so that we can crawl into our own little world, where nothing can get to us or reach us. We expand our view to acknowledge that we must pray for all of God's created world and HIS church, which should be ONE, but on a human level is divided by differences of doctrine, misunderstandings and sometimes by pure hate. There can be no

peace where such things exist.

We also pray for "THIS holy house, and for those who with faith, reverence and the fear of God enter therein ..." That means **us**. Specifically it is for our own parish community and those who have come to church with a certain attitude toward God. Notice the words faith, reverence, and the fear of God as qualifiers! They describe a person who believes with his/her whole heart, who reveres God (which can often be seen by one's conduct in God's house i.e. is on time, is praying with the rest of the community and not socializing during the liturgy, etc.) and has a fear of God. That is not a fear of a big, mean god. It is a fear of not being worthy to stand in the presence and the glory of God as we come into his presence with Him every time we gather to pray especially if we are approaching the Eucharist — the Body and Blood of Christ Himself.

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