



# ST OLYMPIA ORTHODOX CHURCH

POTSDAM, NEW YORK 13676

ORTHODOX CHURCH OF AMERICA  
DIOCESE OF NY AND NJ

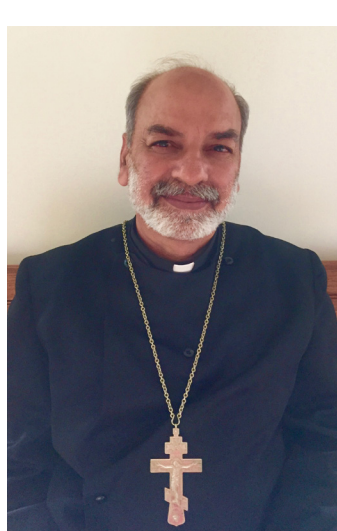


**Welcome to St. Olympia Orthodox Church,  
a young and, God willing, growing community of worshippers.**

**Our priest is Fr. Peter Irfan, Acting Rector.  
You may reach him at 716-342-8520 (cell) or at fatherpeter777@yahoo.com.**

**Please join us for prayer and fellowship.  
Divine Liturgies are held every Sunday at 10 am.  
Great Vespers are held every Saturday evening at 5 pm.**

## Getting to know Father Peter and Matushka Mary



Fr. Peter Irfan was born into a Roman Catholic family in Lahore, Pakistan. His love for Christ led him to attend Catholic seminaries for five years in preparation for the priesthood. However, God had a different plan: he worked at Bethania Hospital in Sialkot, Pakistan, for nine years where he met Mary, a Christ-filled young woman from a devout Protestant family who was a nurse at that hospital. They fell in love and married. He taught music in boarding schools, led seminars, youth rallies and youth camps, and founded the Christian Youth Alliance through the Catholic Diocese in Pakistan. He later moved back to Lahore and founded the Christian-based Council of Youth Advisors, eventually becoming its CEO. The mission of this organization, which still exists today, is to save youth from drug use and addiction through education, sports activities, seminars and varied social activities. Although his marriage had prohibited his ordination to the Catholic priesthood, he felt in his heart that God was still calling him to the ministry. One day, a friend from his seminary days gave him a pamphlet on Orthodoxy. Intrigued by the beliefs and encouraged by the inclusion of married clergy, he investigated further and eventually was sponsored to come to this country to learn more about the Faith. He and Matushka immigrated to the U.S. in 2001, first living New York City and then moving to Buffalo where Fr. Peter was later attached to St. George Orthodox Church. He first came to Potsdam for a Sunday in Great Lent on an emergency basis, and then for all of Holy Week. With the blessing of Archbishop Michael, his service to St. Olympia Orthodox Church continued until earlier this month while appropriate documents were being prepared for the longer-term assignment of Acting Rector.

Fr. Peter feels that his specific calling is missionary work, to spread the love of Christ through the Gospels. We are grateful for his and Mat. Mary's deep faith to be willing to move to Potsdam and for him to become the spiritual leader of our mission. Fr. Peter and Mat. Mary will also have, as Fr. Peter puts it, "secular" jobs in order to make this happen for us. Fr. Peter has had diverse work experiences and has also spent many years in auto parts sales. Mat. Mary was an R.N. in Pakistan. Presently, she is seeking a position in the medical field and eventually hopes to get certified in the U.S. as an R.N. (she is already certified as a CNA and CMA). The Irfans have two grown daughters: Saba, who lives in New Jersey and works in New York City, and Sada, who lives and works in Buffalo. Another special part of the Irfan family is Barney, a highly intelligent Cockatiel who also has become a North Country resident.

We are deeply grateful to Archbishop Michael who blessed and encouraged, and also enabled Fr. Peter's assignment through diocesan financial support, and to Fr. Alexey Karlcut, Dean of New York State, for much help and guidance.

## Next Services

**Saturday, July 21st  
Great Vespers  
5:00 pm**

**Sunday, July 22nd  
Matins  
9:30 am  
(Summer hours)**

**Divine Liturgy  
10:00 am**

at

**St. Olympia Chapel  
123 Main Street  
Potsdam, NY**

**All welcome!**

## Seventh Sunday after Pentecost

**Gospel: Matthew 9:27-35**

*Note: the following article has been written by an anonymous contributor.  
It is included here by permission.*

Whenever we talk of "prayer," we're usually thinking about asking God for this or that. And asking for others and ourselves is indeed part of prayer; the Lord Himself teaches us to ask the Father to "give us this day our daily bread." But before asking should come worship and praise; then confession and repentance; then thanksgiving; and only our asking.

Why? Because it's when we get out of ourselves, out of our own needs and concerns, and just focus on the goodness, the greatness, and the love of God, that we start really to appreciate God. Further, worship and praise are channels through which the Holy Spirit builds our trust in God, so we can then ask with confidence. It's a joyful focus on the greatness, the glory, the goodness, the power, and the love of God, that builds our trust in God; and it's specific thanksgiving for what God has done and is doing in our life, that builds our confidence in God's ability and willingness. Honestly, now: how big is your asking, and mine? Most of us put only small or "reasonable" requests before God, in part because we're afraid of appearing "greedy," but in larger part because we're not really confident that God can and/or wants to and/or will handle our request. In answer to God's question in Genesis 18:14, "Is anything too hard for the LORD?," we're not quite sure how to answer honestly. How often and how easily do you and I actually do exactly what Hebrews 4:16 begs us to do: "come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need," and present petitions that the One on that "throne of grace" is not only King of kings and Lord of lords, but our heavenly Father?

What does such faith look like? In today's Gospel, Matthew 9:27-35, "two blind men followed [Jesus], crying out and saying, 'Son of David, have mercy on us!'" Now that's asking, alright...but it also seems a little vague, yes? Neither man asks for anything other than mercy. Why didn't they ask to be healed of their blindness? They persistently and insistently "followed [Jesus], crying out;" so clearly both men had such trust in Jesus that they believed that He not only had the power to meet their need, but also knew their need better than they did. But before meeting their need, the Lord asks, "'Do you believe that I am able to do this?' They said to Him, 'Yes, Lord.'" Jesus goes right to the heart of the matter. He's asking them if they believe that He can do for them what He had done for others in the past.

And He's asking you and me the very same question today, both personally and corporately. "Do you really believe that I am Who I say I am," He asks, "and that I can and will do what I've said that I can and will do?" Jesus may not be saying to any of us, "I can restore your physical sight;" but He may well be saying, "I can restore your spiritual sight" or "I can restore your joy" or "I can remove your fear" or "I can give you the courage you need to face and deal with your issues" or "I can save your lost friends and loved ones" or "I can provide all the resources that you need" or "I can renew My life in your parish" or "I can send the Holy Spirit like a mighty rushing wind."

But in each case, His "I can" is followed immediately by "Do you believe that I am able to do this?" Do we really believe that He can and wants to and will meet our need? And why does Jesus need our faith, our trust, in order to answer our prayer and meet our need? Because it is our faith which gives Him our permission to act. It may sound weird to say that God needs our permission to do anything; but the fact that God chose to create us with free will means that we have the power to shut Him out of our lives and situations. So God refuses to force anything down our unwilling throats. 1 Timothy 2:4, for example, says that God "desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth." That's what God wants, but He's not going to force anyone to be saved; our "Yes" to His offer of salvation is indeed generated and empowered by the Holy Spirit, but we still have to give our assent.

Now, notice that these two blind men do not hesitate; they do not give a halfway answer; and they do not compromise. When Jesus asks, "'Do you believe that I am able to do this?'" they respond immediately, "'Yes, Lord.'" Well, their answer to the Lord's question needs to be our answer too: "Yes, Lord." When He asks, "Do you believe that I can supply every spiritual, financial and material need you have and this parish has?" "Yes, Lord." We can't afford to hem, haw, hedge, be halfway halfhearted; and we cannot afford to hesitate.

But how do we get to a truly honest "'Yes, Lord'"? First, we ask for it. James 1:17 says that "every good giving and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights;" and solid trust in God is certainly a perfect gift. But, says James 4:2, "you do not have because you do not ask." How often, just in the last week, and with how much honest longing, have you or I asked God to increase our trust in Him? How high a priority for you or for me is a totally surrendered trust in God's will and God's willingness? (And note how trust in God's will comes before trust in God's willingness! What we have to trust first and foremost is that God knows what we need far better than we do!) If we do not have, because we do not ask, isn't it time to start asking?

Secondly, we use the faith we have. Faith, trust in God, does not depend upon the amount of our faith but on the object of our faith. Again and again and again, until we have get it, we need to go back to our Lord's words in Matthew 17:20, where the Lord says, "If you have faith as a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move; and nothing will be impossible for you," because it's God, the object of our faith, the Person we're putting our trust in, who actually moves the mountain. We dare not phony up our faith, and pretend we have a deeper trust in God than we actually have, in order to "persuade" God to act on our behalf, because He sees right through such lies. We just have to trust Him as far as we honestly can, and ask for His help to trust Him the rest of the way. Always remember the father of the epileptic boy who was honest with the Lord: "Lord, I believe; help my unbelief! Jesus, I'm trusting you as far as I can; help me where my trust falls short." And it was enough.

Thirdly, we study what God has done for others. Psalm 46:9 urges us to "Come, behold [see, examine] the works of the Lord." It was our God Who enabled 90-year-old Sarah to conceive and bear a son; it was our God Who parted the Red Sea and Who fed and protected Israel for 40 years in the desert; it was our God Who enabled a skinny teen-ager named David to slay the 9-foot-tall Goliath; it was our God Who cleansed Naaman the Syrian of his leprosy; it was our God Who protected Daniel in the lion's den and the Three Holy Youths in the fiery furnace; it was our God Who enabled the Virgin to conceive by the Holy Spirit, without the touch of man, and bear a Son; it was our God to Whom they brought "many who were demon-possessed. And He cast out the spirits with a word, and healed all who were sick;" it was our God Who called Lazarus "Lazarus, come forth!" and he who'd been dead for days came forth; it was our God Who on the third day raised to new life His only begotten Son Who'd been stabbed through the heart with a spear just to make sure He was dead. And on and on it goes. "Come, behold the works of the Lord;" and understand that this same God means exactly what He says in Malachi 3:6, "I am the LORD, I do not change," and that He is ever able.

Fourthly, we reflect on what God has already done for us. Almost every Liturgy for the First Antiphon we sing selected verses of Psalm 103, "Bless the LORD, O my soul." But what we often miss is that this psalm begins as a list of what David has to be thankful for, a celebration of all that God has done in David's life: forgiven his iniquities, healed all his diseases, redeemed his life from destruction by Saul and so many other enemies, crowned him with loving-kindness and tender mercies, satisfied his mouth with good things, and renewed his energy. And if you and I were to sit down and really think, we'd each come up with a "thanksgiving list" of our own: all the ways in which God has already demonstrated His power, His providential care, His love, in our individual lives. And the point is clear: if God has done so much already, what's not to trust?

And how does our story end? "Then He touched their eyes, saying, 'According to your faith let it be to you.' And their eyes were opened." Jesus gifts these blind men with healing because they believed, because they trusted in the goodness of His will, the greatness of His power, and the depths of His love. Jesus moved powerfully in their lives because they placed their complete and total trust in Him. Are you and I gonna take the hint? It's your choice...and mine too.

## Forthcoming Events

### Parish Food Drive:

Please bring canned food for donation to Helping Hands food pantry on **Sunday July 15th or Sunday, July 22nd.**

Particularly needed items:

- |                  |                 |
|------------------|-----------------|
| fruit juice      | canned tuna     |
| canned chicken   | mac and cheese  |
| jellies and jams | spaghetti sauce |
| peanut butter    | laundry soap    |
| dish soap        | shampoo         |

### Blessing of Vehicles: - Rescheduled!

The new date is **Sunday, August 5th** immediately after the Divine Liturgy.

This short, simple prayer service reminds us that we, and our vehicles, are in God's hands. This is the season of much travel. Come bring your cars, bicycles, motorcycles, ATVs...

Bring neighbors and friends--all are welcome to receive this blessing!