

Next Services

**Saturday
October 7th**

Great Vespers at 5:00 pm

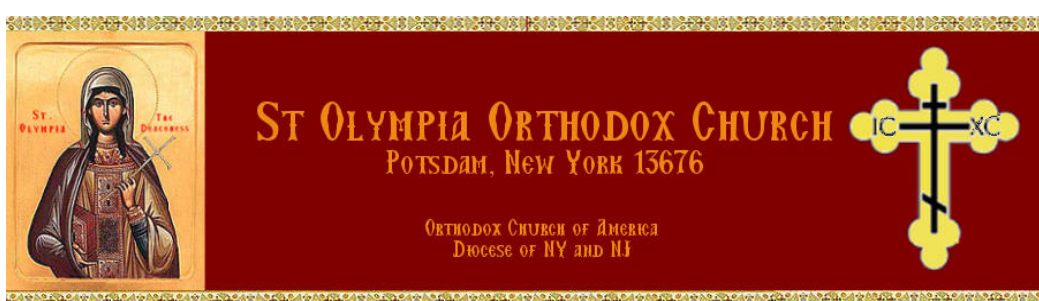
**Sunday
October 8th**

Divine Liturgy at 10:00 am

both at

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

All welcome!



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

Join us for prayer and fellowship. Divine Liturgies are held every Sunday and are primarily in English. Fr. Luke Majoros is our presbyter.

Visit us on Facebook or www.saintolympiorthodoxchurch.org

Ox and Donkey

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

17th Sunday after Pentecost Epistle (2 Cor.6:16-7:1)

Have you ever noticed how, within five minutes of getting a little boy all cleaned up, dressed up and ready to go to church or over to grandma's, there'll be grass-stains on those new pants and God-knoweth-what on that bright white shirt? And have you ever noticed that if you go out for Italian food, you'll come home with spaghetti sauce on you somewhere? When we engage with the physical world, we often pick up some of its dirt.

And what's true physically is doubly true spiritually. Our fallen world really is a spiritual pig pen. We're constantly exposed to filth through newspapers, radio, television, films, the internet---basically every aspect of our lives. And because we're trained from infancy onward in our need to "fit in" and be like everybody else, it's nearly impossible for us not pick up some of the dirt---or more than some. Let's be clear: we live in a non-Christian world; and oftentimes it's hard to be a Christian: to talk like a Christian, to act like a Christian, to publicly embrace the values of a Christian and live by the principles of as Christian. The majority of people we live next to, go to school with, are taught by or work with, the shows we watch, basically most of the people we encounter, do not look at the world from a Christian point of view. That's nothing new, of course. The Christians at Corinth lived in and were surrounded by a city saturated in pagan idols, immorality and sin; and some of that philosophy and immoral lifestyle and attitude had crept into that congregation. That's why, in today's Epistle, 2 Corinthians 6:16-7:1, St. Paul gives us principles that will help us stay clean while we're living in the midst of a pig pen.

Firstly, says the Apostle, give your head a shake! Back in verse 14 St. Paul writes, "Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness?" This concept goes back to Deuteronomy 22:10, "You shall not plow with an ox and a donkey together." You see, those two animals have very different natures and just don't work well together. The ox is usually hard-working, cooperative, and focused on the job, while the donkey is stubborn and feisty. And the point is that certain things are fundamentally incompatible; like oil and water, they were never meant to be joined together. And that applies to the Christian and the world and its values. One biblical commentator writes, "The purity and nature of the Christian and the pollution and nature of a pagan were never intended to run together in a double harness."

In the waters of Holy Baptism, we die to our old fallen nature and are raised up with Christ to a new nature. In 2 Corinthians 5:17 the Apostle assures us that "If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new." How are we new? 2 Peter 1:4 tells us that there "have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these [we] may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world." Because we are joined to Christ, we share in God's own life. But that sharing with God demands separation from the world, as St. Paul asks in verse 14, "What fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness?" We cannot at one and the same time live God's kind of life according to God's values and live the world's anti-God life according to its anti-God values. In Matthew 6:24 the Lord Jesus warns us, "No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon." And the reason our Christian faith and life are so often flabby and fragile is because that's exactly what we try to do: serve God and mammon; live both by the Gospel and by this world's values and priorities.

But we cannot be our authentic selves in Christ or fulfill our Christ-given responsibility to be "the salt of the earth" and "the light of the world" if we live according to the corruption of the world and are not morally different from the world. We keep trying to fool ourselves that we can "have it all" or are too strong in our faith ever to be corrupted. But James 4:4 calls us on that rubbish, insisting that "friendship with the world is enmity with God;" we can be the world's friend, or we can be God's friend, but not both. And that, by the way, is why we Orthodox pray at every Liturgy "that we may complete the remaining time of our life in peace and repentance:" so that we may confront ourselves continually and ruthlessly with all the ways in which we're still trying to play both ends against the middle and then, with the help of God's grace, in the power of the Holy Spirit, to purge those poisons from our hearts and lives. Your call and mine is to be merciless in self-examination: examining our every thought, every act, every desire; comparing it to the Gospel; and then by God's grace cleaning house and---again, always and only with the help of God's empowering grace---keeping ourselves separate from lawlessness and darkness.

And that includes not only actions and attitudes, but also relationships. No, we cannot and are not supposed to totally isolate ourselves from the world. Back in 1 Corinthians 5:9-10 St. Paul writes, "I wrote to you in my epistle not to keep company with sexually immoral people. Yet I certainly did not mean with the sexually immoral people of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or idolaters, since then you would need to go out of the world." We cannot completely isolate ourselves from the world and still do our job of exerting a positive influence on the society around us. But again let's face facts: apart from the grace of God, not one of us is strong enough to resist our programming to "fit in," strong enough to resist corruption, strong enough to avoid the ungodly influence of the world and people around us. Think about how easy it is just to fall into trading nasty gossip with friends, neighbors, colleagues. Think about how readily being "one of the guys" at work leads to dirty jokes, smutty talk, and making materialism our end-all and be-all. It's not to spiritual infants but to adult believers that, in 1 Corinthians 15:33, St. Paul warningly quotes the proverb "Bad company corrupts good morals."

That's why Paul asks, "What accord has Christ with Belial [Satan]? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever? And what agreement has the temple of God with idols?" In other words, we need to ask ourselves: "In the ways that really count in time and in eternity, what do so-and-so and I actually have in common? Do we share the same basic values, beliefs, priorities, goals, ethics?" If in terms of principles, values, and goals there's really no harmony, no agreement, nothing in common, that relationship should be at best arm's-length. There's a big difference between casual association and being "unequally yoked," being tied together in close intimate relationship, being partners together over extended periods of time so that the methods, priorities, and strategies of one become the methods, priorities and strategies of the other.

What are some relationships we're to avoid? Obviously, a Christian should not marry a non-Christian. Think: isn't it hard enough to make a marriage work, so that the two really do become one, without building the Grand Canyon of a difference of faith right through the middle of it? "But we love each other!" Perhaps. But for the Christian, love of Christ comes first, as Jesus Himself tells us in Matthew 10:37, "He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me." That's hard---which is why in verse 38 Jesus immediately adds, "And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me." Further, a Christian should not be unequally yoked in business partnerships. Some folks say, "Well, business is business." No. For the Christian, everything in his/her life is God's business, to be conducted God's way, according to God's values and ethics. So teaming up with a non-believer is asking for trouble: the trouble of compromising one's faith, and/or of being immersed in terrible stress, and/or a forced end to that partnership, usually much worse for the wear. And hard as it may be, a Christian should not be unequally yoked in friendships. Yes, we can have a good friend who's an unbeliever. But our closest friendships/relationships should be with those who hold to and share with us the same convictions, faith and values; people with whom we can exchange mutual encouragement, love and building-up in the Lord. As believers we're together on the front lines of spiritual warfare and need each other in ways no unbeliever could imagine. That's why Hebrews 3:13 tells us to "exhort [encourage] one another daily."

Being a Christian and living the Christian vocation to "be holy in all [our] behavior" in a fundamentally anti-God world demands separation from the ideals, principles, values, goals, and aspirations of the world, and being set apart unto Christ and our relationship with Him. That can be a hard choice sometimes. But what and whom are you and I choosing for: the world or Christ; time or eternity?



Our annual Open House, **Orthodox Education Day**, will be held on our campus, **Saturday, October 7**, beginning with **Divine Liturgy at 10 a.m.**

This year's timely theme is "**Modern Martyrs: Christians of the Middle East and North Africa**," and the Keynote, presented by biblical scholar **Father Georgios Parsenios**, is titled, "Dying, and Behold, We Live: Martyrdom in the New Testament."

Additionally, we'll be featuring...

- An emotionally powerful exhibit of photographs of modern martyrs
- Seminary alumnus Father Abraham Wassel speaking about recent slayings of Christians in North Africa and resulting effects on Coptic Orthodox parishes in North Africa
- Nuns from **All Saints Monastery** talking about their healing ministry for victims of human trafficking: "Martyrdom as Witness: Helping the Hopeless in America"
- Christine Chaillot, on hand for a book signing of her latest work, *The Dialogue between Eastern Orthodox and Oriental Orthodox Churches*
- Supplication services for suffering and martyred Christians

As well, we'll be hosting...

- A kid-friendly activity area led by Jenny Moshier
- Teen talks and activities led by Fr. John Hopko
- A buffet of delicious entrées, desserts, and poured-over coffee
- A full display of SVS Press & Bookstore books, CDs, icons, and other religious items

Our community will warmly welcome you to our campus for "Ed Day," and, I'll especially look forward to joining you for a cup of poured-over coffee!

Links in this bulletin are not live. For information, details, and registration go to <https://www.svots.edu/timely/oeod>

Sayings of Fr. Joel

Due to a mistake on the part of the editor, sayings of the Desert Fathers is taking a one-week hiatus.

Archimandrite Joel Giannakopoulos lived a quiet and modest life in the town of Kalamas, Greece. He had the gifts of spiritual insight and prophecy. These anecdotes were collected by another priest-monk who was a friend of his two years after Fr. Joel's repose in 1966.

Dignity

Fr. Joel was asked by a certain naive Christian, "Father Joel, why don't you become a bishop?" And he responded, "They know my address: Joel Giannakopoulos, Archimandrite, Kalamas." "But if you don't ask them, they won't make you one." "If someone asks them to make him a bishop, is he worth of respect? What do you say?" "Well... of course he isn't." "So you are advising me to stop being worthy of respect?"

Joy vs. Glory

A similar question from someone else: "Father Joel, why don't you strive to become a bishop?" "What would I gain from the episcopacy? Glory of joy?" No reply. "My work in the word of God gives me much joy. So I have no reason to seek joy, since I have it. Should I seek after glory? But if you have joy, why get glory? If you don't have joy, what will glory do for you?"

The Highest Office

Another person expressed this wish to Fr. Joel: "Father, I wish you to become a bishop quickly. You will benefit the Church much more." "I prefer that you make a wish for me to become something higher." "What? An archbishop? I hope so." "No. Even higher." "But there is nothing higher than a patriarch." "Make a wish that I become an autocrat." "An autocrat????!!!" "Yes, an autocrat. Not, however, written with a *psili* [smooth-breathing accent mark] but with the *daseia* [rough-breathing accent mark]." "I don't understand you." "Autocrats written with the *psili* are those who control nations. Autocrats with the *daseia* are those who control their own selves, who are masters and not slaves of their own passions. Let's pray that we become this. It is the highest of all offices."

Simplicity and Depth

During a conversation when there was a discussion about preaching, he said, "The sermon must be simple and deep. Deep in order to attract and simple in order to be understood."

The Epistle is Beautiful

During a conversation which had to do with those who take the Divine Liturgy to be a spectacle to see and hear, he said: "You hear them say, 'How beautifully the chanter said the Epistle!' Should we say, 'How beautifully the chanter said the Epistle' or 'What a beautiful Epistle the chanter said?' The Epistle is beautiful and that's what we must pay attention to..."

The Value of the Soul

"The value of the soul is infinite. And this is most evident. When we want to wash a cloth we never use soap which is more expensive than the cloth. The soap we use will be cheaper than the material or at most of the same value. With what was the human soul washed and cleansed? With the blood of the Lord! What value does the blood of the Lord have? Infinite value! Then the value of the human soul which was cleansed by it must also be infinite!"