

**Week of  
May 7th  
2017**

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### Next Divine Liturgy

**May 14th  
Sunday  
10:00 am  
Sunday of the  
Samaritan Woman**

**All welcome!**

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

### **Sayings from the Desert Fathers**

*St. Anthony the Great is often considered the father of monasticism. He was born in Egypt to Christian peasant farmers c. 251 AD. When he was about 18 years old, when he heard the Gospel passage: "Go, sell what you have and give to the poor" Matthew 19:21 entered his heart. He did this and then spent the rest of his life as an ascetic in the desert. His wisdom was deep and renowned even though he was unlearned. St. Anthony died at the age of 105.*

Somebody asked Abba Anthony, "What must one do in order to please God?" The old man replied, "Pay attention to what I tell you: whoever you may be, always have God before your eyes; whatever you do, do it according to the testimony of the holy Scriptures; in whatever place you live, do not easily leave it. Keep these three precepts and you will be saved."

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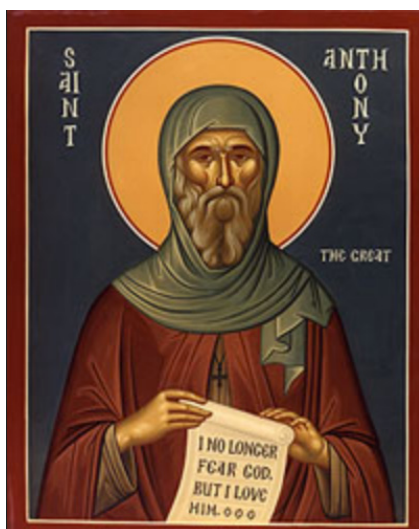
When the same Abba Anthony thought about the depth of the judgements of God, he asked, "Lord, how is it that some die when they are young, while others drag on to extreme old age? Why are there those who are poor and those who are rich? Why do wicked men prosper and why are the just in need?" He heard a voice answering him, "Anthony, keep your attention on yourself; these things are according to the judgement of God, and it is not to your advantage to know anything about them."

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Abba Anthony said to Abba Poemen, "This is the great work of a man: always to take the blame for his own sins before God and to expect temptation to his last breath."

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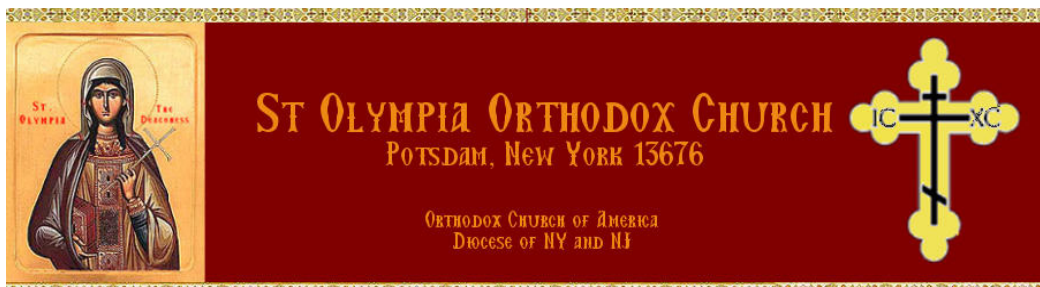
Abba Anthony said, "I saw the snares that the enemy spreads out over the world and I said groaning, "What can get through from such snares?" Then I heard a voice saying to me, 'Humility.'"



### **Planning Ahead**

Archbishop Michael's next visit to Potsdam will be:

**Saturday-Sunday,  
September 9-10, 2017**



*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.*

*Visit us on Facebook or [www.saintolympiaorthodoxchurch.org](http://www.saintolympiaorthodoxchurch.org)*

## **Christ is risen!**

The Fifth Sunday of Pascha is known as the Sunday of the Samaritan Woman and has the Gospel reading of John 4:5-29. This is a narrative rich with insight and meaning. St. John Chrysostom highlights that in this story Christ crosses boundaries of religion, culture and gender for the salvation of all mankind:

"[Christ] shows that [the Samaritan woman] is worthy to hear and not to be overlooked, and it is then He reveals Himself. For she, as soon as she had learned who He was, would immediately listen and attend to Him. This none can say of the Jews, for they, when they were aware, asked nothing of Him; not did they desire to be informed on any profitable matter. Instead, they insulted and drove Him away.... Not without reason does she here call Him, 'Lord,' and assign high honor to Him... Do not wonder if she failed to perceive everything at once, for neither did Nicodemus.... Now if a woman of Samaria is so eager to learn something profitable; if she stays with Christ though not yet knowing Him, what pardon shall we obtain? We know Him...yet are unable to endure anything that is said, but are jaded in our knowledge." (Homily XXXI on John III as quoted in *The Bible and the Holy Fathers*)

A beautiful passage in this reading comes in verse 25 in which the Samaritan woman states "I know that the Messiah is coming" (who is called Christ). "When He comes, He will tell us all things." Christ's answer in translation is "I who speak to you am He." As the Orthodox Study Bible points out, the Greek response is much stronger: "ΕΓΩ ΕΙΜΙ" which is the divine name for God in Septuagint Greek. For Christ to speak these words is a Theophany or revelation of God and would have been blasphemy had He been simply human.

At the end of the narrative, the disciples return from the city and offer Christ food. First, He gives the rather enigmatic answer, "I have good to eat of which you do not know." He later clarifies: "My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me..." Bishop Nikolai Velimirovic reflects on this passage in his book, *Prolog*:

"Here is love! Here is teaching! Here is acquiescence! Here is a model! ... Those who love also serve. If you want to find out how great our love is towards God, then measure your obedience to the will of God, and you will immediately learn. Lack of positive obedience is a sign of a lack of love. Those who love, delight in fulfilling the will of the beloved. The Son of God so loved His Father, that He thought it to be preferable to food to fulfill the will of the Father. What is the will of the Father? The salvation of man. The Lord, Son of God, felt an unquenchable hunger to carry out the will of the Father. And when He had saved [a soul] He felt nourished with the sweetest food. See how exalted is the spirituality of Christ!..."

"O my brothers, if you only knew how much Christ our Lord also hungers for our salvation!... We begin our own salvation which He offers to us. That is for Him the most gladsome food..."

This week, as last week and many times throughout the lectionary of the Church, the Epistle and Gospel pericope reinforce each other. On this Sunday, the reading from Acts (11:19-30) speaks of the apostles scattering after the martyrdom of St. Stephen. This horrific and hateful act causes the spread of the Gospel. They traveled "as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus and Antioch..." eventually preaching the Gospel to both Jews and Hellenists. The Samaritan woman went back to the city and told of her encounter and many "believed in Him because of the word of the woman who testified..." Within the tradition of the church, we know that the Samaritan woman was baptized and took the name Photini (lit. "enlightened one"—Svetlana in Russian). She bears the title, "Equal-to-the-Apostles" Among those who believed were her five sisters (Ss. Anatoli, Photo, Photis, Paraskevi and Kyriaki) and two sons (Ss. Photinos and Joses), all who became evangelists for Christ. They travelled to Carthage to proclaim the Gospel and were martyred during the persecutions of Nero c. 66 AD.

The Samaritan woman was, in Jewish eyes, a heretic and a person to be shunned. In the Gospel reading Christ clearly shows that salvation is for all and in the Epistle passage, we see the Church developing that mindset (not without growing pains, c.f. Acts 11). As St. Paul wrote, "There is neither Greek nor Jew, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus."

