



## 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.**

**Your 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.**

### Next Services

### 2018 College Student Sunday Encyclical

October 7, 2018

Saturday, October 13th

“Who do you say that I am?”

#### Great Vespers

5:00 pm

**Fr. Peter is available to hear confessions before Vespers by appointment.**

Beloved Clergy and Faithful,

We greet you with joy as we announce the date for College Student Sunday, benefiting Orthodox Christian Fellowship (OCF). To support the incredible efforts of our students, College Student Sunday will be the first Sunday of October, running in conjunction with OCF's Orthodox Awareness Month. This year the date falls on OCTOBER 7.

Sunday, October 14th

#### Matins

8:45 am

#### Divine Liturgy

10:00 am

#### Fellowship to follow

at

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

Orthodox Christian Fellowship continues to provide students with opportunities to encounter Jesus Christ and grow in their Orthodox faith through a growing network of on campus OCF chapters led by talented students, clergy, and lay advisors as well as through programs such as Regional Retreats, College Conference, Real Break, and the Summer Leadership Institute.

OCF continues to make every effort to connect new freshmen to campus chapters and local parishes through the First Forty Days Initiative, which involves extensive effort from our student leaders and spiritual advisors who contact every incoming freshman within the first forty days on campus. We wholeheartedly pray for and strongly encourage your support of these noble efforts by ensuring that the contact information for your parish's graduating high school seniors is sent each and every year to the OCF National Office for dissemination to our dedicated local chapters.

Additionally, with the greatest sincerity and earnestness, we encourage your committed financial support of this fundamental ministry which functions completely on the contributions of caring Orthodox faithful like yourselves.

We are asking that a special collection be taken on College Student Sunday in support of the good work of OCF, and we encourage the entire faithful family – clergy, parents, grandparents, godparents, aunts, uncles, and friends of our treasured college students – to be generous in your offering of support to this ministry on their behalf. If for some reason October 7 is not a good date for your parish, please make the collection on another Sunday in October. Donations may be sent to the OCF National Office at 50 Goddard Avenue, Brookline, MA 02445 or online at [www.ocf.net/donate](http://www.ocf.net/donate).

May our Lord God and Savior Jesus Christ who calls all of us to contribute to the ministry of His Church guide and strengthen all of our cherished and blessed Orthodox college students.

Working in His Vineyard with much love,

+Bishop Gregory of Nyssa

Liaison to OCF for the Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops of the United States of America

## Thoughts on 1 Corinthians 16:13-24

*Note: the following article was written by our anonymous contributor several years ago.*

*It is included here by permission.*

In the First Letter of Paul to the Corinthians, chapter 16, St. Paul bids us, in verses 13-14. “Watch, stand fast in the faith, be brave, be strong. Let all that you do be done with love.” And those verses are clear instruction in what we need to do as individual Christians and as a parish to endure and to flourish as authentic Christians, not just “Sunday Christians.” Of course, we must heed well what St. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 3:6, “I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase.” Ultimately it's God, by His almighty power, His all-sufficient grace, and His unconditional love, Who enables us as individual Christians, as a parish, a diocese, the Church throughout the world, to survive in an increasingly-hostile world, to remain faithful and to grow. But how, by what means, does God normally enable us?

These days, there's a flood of ideas about what it takes to make the Church grow and prosper. But too many of these ideas are proposing worldly means to achieve an essentially worldly measure of so-called “success:” big numbers, big budgets, but stunted souls. Like what? Like “modernizing” how we worship so that we're centered, not on God, but on human emotions---and, not incidentally, thereby robbing God of the glory that is rightly His. Or like forgetting about tithing and sacrificial giving, but instead proposing the use of casinos to raise money---as if any self-respecting family would build into their budget and their life having their bills paid by strangers. Or like going with the flow on social and moral issues, not getting “all worked up” about biblically-rooted traditional morality, because that just doesn't “sell,” especially with the young people we want to attract. Or like ditching fasting and ascetic discipline, because it's “too hard” and turns people off. Or like soft-peddling or just ignoring difficult doctrines like the Trinity, or sin and salvation, or the need for personal holiness, because nobody wants to hear all that stuff any more. No; just make 'em feel all warm and fuzzy when they come to church, and they'll keep coming back. But how can we be faithful to Christ and grow in Christ if we throw out the teaching of Christ? James 4:4 calls it what it is: “Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.” No; if we want to be authentically the Church, we must follow a different agenda, the agenda Paul lays out in 2 Timothy 4:2 for the young Bishop Timothy and for us: “preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season [when it's popular and when it's anything but popular]. Convince, rebuke, exhort [or, encourage], with all patience and teaching.” What is the Gospel of Christ and the teaching of His holy Apostles? Not what's popular, not what's easy, not what's politically correct, but what is true: that is the word we must proclaim, that which in Acts 20:27 St. Paul calls “the whole counsel of God.”

Similarly, in today's Epistle Paul exhorts us, “Watch, stand fast in the faith, be brave, be strong. Let all that you do be done with love.” Now notice that there are actually five commands given by the Apostle here: Watch... Stand fast in the faith...Be brave...Be strong...Do all in love. First, we're told to “watch,” meaning “watch yourselves!” We're supposed to be, not babies, but responsible adults. And the first person we have a responsibility to stand guard over is ourselves, over our own relationship with God, over our own spiritual life, including doing all that it's our part to do to avoid falling into sin. A marriage in which one spouse starts taking the other spouse and the marriage itself for granted, and who stops caring about pleasing their spouse, is a marriage headed for the rocks. The same goes for our relationship with God. God will certainly help us by His grace to live rightly, but He will not make us live rightly. That and Him are something we have to choose. So how mindful are we each day of our relationship with the Father through the Son in the Holy Spirit? And what are the values by which you and I choose to live in the everyday? What principles shape our decision-making? What determines how we behave: our emotions, our wants, our fallen nature, or the Gospel of Christ?

That leads us, secondly, to Paul urging us to “stand fast in the faith,” meaning the content and truth of our faith. How can we be watchful about living rightly if we don't know what it means to live rightly? You and I live by ideas; we make choices and decisions by what we accept as true or false, by what we see as good or bad, as real or unreal. But from where do we take our ideas of true and false, right and wrong, good and bad: from the world around us, from advertising, from politicians, from whatever's trendy, or from the eternal God, Whose truth never changes? 2 Timothy 3:16-17 gives us the bottom line: “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction [or, training] in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete [fully mature], thoroughly equipped for every good work.” All the articles of the Symbol of Faith (the Nicene Creed), all the teachings of the Fathers, all the Canons of the Councils and the Fathers, are rooted in and reveal the meaning of Sacred Scripture. And standing fast in the faith demands doing what the Fathers did: immersing ourselves in the Scriptures, especially the Gospels, and taking from them the truth by which we actually live---and not backing down or away from that truth, no matter what the challenge, what the pressure, or what the penalty for our fidelity.

Which is why, thirdly, Paul says, “be brave.” Too many Christians expect life in Christ to be a picnic in the park when it's actually being a soldier in a war zone. In Ephesians 6:12, St. Paul tells us bluntly that “we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual armies of wickedness in the heaven lies [the spiritual realm].” It takes guts to be a Christian, to hang in there and truly follow Christ, even when it becomes uncomfortable---or inconvenient---or even life-threatening. But if we supply the will to be brave, God will provide the strength. The tragedy is that too often we and I don't even want to be brave, but collapse like a house of cards in abject surrender at the slightest conflict between our comfort and carrying our cross. That's how and why we so blithely rationalize our way out of really forgiving others who've hurt us, or excusing ourselves from fasting, or standing up for Christian faith and Christian values, and so on. But in Luke 9:62 the Lord Jesus tells us something that should shake us to the core: “No one, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.”

Fourthly, Paul says, “be strong.” Strength is necessary for the health, perseverance and endurance of our faith relationship and of the Church. But be strong how? In Ephesians 6:10 Paul tells us, “Be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.” We do not and cannot have within ourselves the strength to stand fast in the truth of the Gospel and against those powers which would try to force us to compromise, water down, soft-peddle or just reject the hard truths of the Gospel---not to mention the strength to fight against the temptations of the world, the flesh, and the devil. But God does have that strength. 1 John 4:4 assures us that “greater is He [the Holy Spirit] that is in you than he that is in the world.” The only question is whether or not you and I really want to “be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.” If we want that strength, He'll give it...but only if we want that strength to live for Him.

And what is the motivation, the context, the culmination and the whole purpose of watching, standing fast, being brave, and being strong? It's not to gain power, position or prominence; it's to do everything “with love,” just as our heavenly Father does everything with love, and thereby we show ourselves to be true children of God, actually living in God's image, according to our Father's likeness. But mark you: godly love is putting one's entire self in service to securing the highest good of not another: not what's easy, not necessarily what's pleasant, but what's needed and right. Godly love is not the same as being nice. “Nice” makes others feel good, at least for the moment; godly love helps others be good and do good in time and in eternity.

Sometimes we wonder how we're supposed to fulfill the commandment, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” But think: standing watch over ourselves so that we set for our neighbor a positive example of what life in and with Christ looks like and allow them to follow us in our standing fast in the truth so that we serve our neighbor as light in the midst of the darkness of our society's postmodernist confusion; being brave under fire, so that our neighbor can see it's possible to be a person of principles and convictions; and being strong in our faith, so our neighbor can know that there is true hope, an anchor of the soul amid the storms of life---and doing all that in genuine caring and concern for our neighbor and their eternal welfare---is one picture of what loving our neighbor looks like. So how watchful, how faithful, how brave, how strong and how loving are you and I today?

**Save the dates...**

**Vladyka Michael will visit our parish on the**

**weekend of Nov. 17th-18th**

**...plan ahead!**