

## Next Services

**Saturday  
October 28th**

**Great Vespers at 5:00 pm**

**Sunday  
October 29th**

**Divine Liturgy at 10:00 am**

**both at**

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

**All welcome!**

**Annual Meeting  
of the Parish  
this coming Sunday  
October 29th  
following  
Divine Liturgy  
Please plan to attend!**



INSPIRED BY FAITHS GIVEN BY PURPOSE

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Due to the financial crisis in Greece, families and the elderly lack essential food items and sustainable jobs, hospitals face shortages of critical medical supplies, and refugees seeking shelter face greater challenges each day.

Thanks to the generosity of the Jaharis Family Foundation, Inc., we have an opportunity to make an impact for those in need in Greece. Now through February 28, 2018, the Jaharis Family Foundation, Inc., will match the first \$1 million in donations towards our Greece programs. Consider making a gift today, and your support will go twice as far.

**DONATE TODAY**

Links in this bulletin are not live. Go to <https://www.iocc.org/> to donate to this or the many other projects in the U.S. and around the world that are funded by IOCC.

### **Potsdam Interfaith Thanksgiving Program**

**Help us help those in need!**

Our parish is one of the contributing churches for this wonderful annual project that provides boxed-to-go Thanksgiving meals for people who would be without.

Please plan to bring non-perishable goods such as cranberry sauce, stuffing mix, canned vegetables, canned fruit, etc. to church on Sunday, Nov. 5th or 12th as a donation toward this community project.

Volunteers for sorting, boxing and deliver will also be needed during the week of Nov. 19th.

### **Sayings of the Desert Fathers**

Abba John the Dwarf said, "There was a spiritual old man who lived a secluded life. He was held in high estimation in the city and had a great reputation. He was told that a certain old man, at the point of death, was calling for him, to embrace him before he fell asleep. He thought to himself, if I go by day, people will run after me, giving me great honor, and I shall not be at peace in all that. So I will go in the evening in the darkness and I shall escape everyone's notice. But lo, two angels were sent by God with lamps to give him light. Then the whole city came out to see his glory. The more he wished to flee from the glory, the more he was glorified. In this was accomplished that which is written: 'He who humbles himself will be exalted.'" (Luke 14:11)

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A brother came to see Abba Macarius and said to him, "Abba, give me a word, that I may be saved." So the old man said, "Go to the cemetery and abuse the dead." The brother went there, abused them and threw stones at them; then he returned and told the old man about it. The latter said to him, "Didn't they say anything to you?" He replied, "No." The old man said, "Go back tomorrow and praise them." So the brother went away and praised them, calling them, "Apostles, saints and righteous men." He returned to the old man and said to him, "I have complimented them." And the old man said to him, "Did they not answer you?" The brother said, "No." The old man said to him, "you know how you insulted them and they did not reply, and how you praised them and they did not speak; so you too if you wish to be saved must do the same and become a dead man. Like the dead, take no account of either the scorn of men or their praises, and you can be saved."

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Abba Matoes said, "I prefer a light and steady activity to one that is painful at the beginning and thus is soon broken off."

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He also said, "The nearer a man draws to God, the more he sees himself a sinner. It was when Isaiah the prophet saw God, that he declared himself 'a man of unclean lips.'" (Is. 6:5)

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He also said, "Satan does not know by what passion the soul can be overcome. He sows, but without knowing if he will reap, sometimes thoughts of fornication, sometimes thoughts of slander, and similarly for the other passions. He supplies nourishment to the passion which he sees the soul is slipping towards."



**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.**

**Join us for prayer and fellowship.**

**Divine Liturgies are held every Sunday and are primarily in English.**

**Fr. Luke Majoros is our presbyter.**

## Transformed

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

### **20th Sunday after Pentecost Epistle (Gal.1:11-19)**

In Matthew 5:13 the Lord Jesus calls us, His followers, "the salt of the earth." And we know full well that salt that stays in the shaker doesn't do anybody any good at all. So obviously, Jesus wants us to be out there as a preserving influence in this decaying world. He wants us to make a difference in people's lives. He wants us to speak with authority so that people will listen and respond? But the big question is always "How?" How can we as God's people be a positive influence on those around us? And in a pluralistic society such as ours, how can we gain a real hearing among the various voices clamoring for people's attention? Well, let's take a look at this morning's Epistle, Galatians 1:11-19 and sneak beyond it to verse 24, where the Apostle Paul, in defending his apostleship, draws a picture of what it takes to get a hearing.

Now, in verses 11-12 Paul makes the point that he didn't get his teaching from any human being, but directly from Jesus Christ Himself: "But I make known to you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came through the revelation of Jesus Christ." He explains in verses 16-17 that after his experience with the risen Jesus on the road to Damascus, Paul did not "go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me; but I went to Arabia, and returned again to Damascus." That sojourn in the desert is significant, because that's where Paul met with Christ in personal prayer and reflection: in the desert, in the silence, in the absence of distractions, where he was focused on nothing and nobody but Jesus. The false teachers who dogged Paul's steps liked to boast of their close association with the leaders of the church in Judea and loved to drop the names of important people. But Paul's authority and ministry came from his connection to Christ Himself. Paul's right to be heard came because he knew Christ personally, and he had learned from Christ directly.

And right there is where you and I begin to gain our right to be heard: not because we've studied under great human teachers; not because we have a bachelor's degree or a master's degree, or a Ph.D. or a seminary education; but because we have spent time and continue to spend time alone with the Master Himself, Jesus Christ our Lord; because we have come to know Him personally and are continually being transformed by His grace; and it shows in our words, our attitudes, our behaviors, our choices, our recreation, our everything. Without being in communion, without being in personal contact and relationship, with Jesus Christ, and without absorbing and making our own His teaching, His Gospel, our words have no weight, because it's all rumor and hearsay. In Isaiah 55:8 God tells us bluntly, "My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways, says the LORD;" so what you or I think, what your opinion or mine is, doesn't matter squat. It's what God thinks and what God says that matters. And initially it doesn't matter whether somebody else accepts that or not. Do I accept it? And, like Mary, the sister of Martha, do I habitually and intentionally sit at Jesus' feet and hear His word, shutting out all distractions, all other focuses for my attention? Only then can you or I speak with any authority at all.

And let's remember how, in John 14:6 Jesus insists, "I am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life." Sometimes we get the idea that if we know the Scriptures, we have the capital-T Truth, and that if we want to learn the Truth we have to learn the written Word. But there's a lot more to it than that. By itself, knowing stuff, knowing facts, knowing the printed text, is worthless. James 2:18 confronts the purely intellectual and academic faith with an uncomfortable reality: "You believe that there is one God," he says. "You do well [Big whoop!]. The demons also believe---and tremble!" If we really want to know the Truth, we have to know Him Who contains in Himself the Truth and Who is the Truth, Jesus Christ. To speak with any authority in our world, we must know Jesus personally, spend time with Him, become truly one with Him. And no, not many of us can spend three years in a desert communing with Christ as Paul did; but we can spend 30 minutes a day in his presence, yes? We can spend 30 minutes a day listening and talking to Him.

But more than that, in order to gain a hearing in this world we have to do more than know; we also have to be. Gaining a hearing for the Gospel is dependent upon our being transformed by God's grace into a living example of the Gospel. Not that we have to be, or ever could be, perfect and flawless. But if we're to have any credibility with the world, we at least have to be and be visibly, discernibly, in the process of allowing Christ to change us radically from the inside out, such that we demonstrate a transformed life. If we want to make a difference, we have to be different.

That's what happened to Paul. Listen again to verses 13-14, "For you have heard of my former conduct in Judaism, how I persecuted the church of God beyond measure and tried to destroy it. And I advanced in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries in my own nation, being more exceedingly zealous for the traditions of my fathers." Saul, as he was originally named, had a reputation as a zealous persecutor of the Church. He was notorious as a very religious man whose fanaticism led him to kill Christians wherever he found them. But then, God got a hold on his life. In verses 15-16, Paul says, "God, Who separated me [set me apart] from my mother's womb and called me through His grace, was pleased to reveal His Son in me so that I might preach Him among the Gentiles." And in verses 23:24, Paul relates how people "were hearing only, 'He who formerly persecuted us now preaches the faith which he once tried to destroy.' And they glorified God in me." God had planned Saul's conversion and Paul's apostolic ministry from the moment of his birth. But it was only as Christ was revealed in Paul's life that he gained any authority to speak and be heard. Without a changed life, his words meant nothing.

And again, that doesn't mean that Paul was then perfect and flawless, a plaster saint. As we see in Galatians 2:11, Paul still had a fiery temper: "Now when Peter had come to Antioch, I withstood him to his face [I gave him heck], because he was to be blamed." And in Philippians 3:12 he's very honest about the fact that he's still very much a work in progress. After saying how much he longs to "know [Christ] and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings," Paul then admits openly, "Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that [the transformed and fully sanctified life] for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me." Indeed, it was his being still in process and in struggle which lent credibility to his message. He wasn't in some ivory tower preaching down to lesser being about the transforming power of Jesus Christ, as if he were untouched by sin and spiritual struggle. He was right there in the trenches, himself in the battle, being honest about his own struggles, yet insisting, as he does in Philippians 3:8-9, that "indeed I count all things loss for the excellence of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for Whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith." And if we want to be faithful to our own baptismal call to be "the salt of the earth" and "the light of the world," and speak with any authority whatsoever in our pluralistic society, we too must speak with the authority of a changed and changing life.

And oh yes, like Paul, you and I have been separated, set apart, for serving God by serving others. Ephesians 2:10 says that "we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them [make them our way of life]." In and through our baptismal union with Christ Himself, we become members of His Body, set apart to continue His ministry, to be the tongue through which He continues to proclaim the Good News, the hands through which He continues to meet human need, the heart through which He continues to demonstrate the Father's love. You and I have been set apart and called by God, primarily so that Christ Jesus can be revealed to the world in us and through us.

A story is told about a Christian businessman who was in a hurry to catch his train. In his hurry, he bumped into a small boy who had a puzzle in his hand; and the puzzle pieces ended up scattered all over the platform. But instead of rushing on his way, the businessman stooped down and helped the little boy pick up his puzzle pieces---while the train chugged out of the station. After he had finished, the boy looked up into the man's face and asked, "Mister, are you Jesus?" Hmmm. Anybody mistake you or me for Jesus lately? But the Good News is that this can happen as we allow God to transform our lives to allow the compassion and character of Christ to shine through. But will we allow it? Do we even want it? It's your choice...and mine too.