

Next Services

**Saturday
December 2nd**

Great Vespers at 5:00 pm

**Sunday
December 3rd**

Divine Liturgy at 10:00 am

both at

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

All welcome!

Donate to St. Olympia's Building Fund Online

Giving Tuesday is this week. Please help us get our very own public worship space so that we can publish the address of our church and let people know we exist. Go to <http://www.saintolympiaorthodoxchurch.org/> where you will find the following donation link:

*Please donate to help us
grow our Mission*

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Thank you

St Olympia Orthodox Church

(St Olympia Orthodox Mission)

Sayings of the Desert Fathers

Abba Bitimius related that Abba Macarius said this: "When I was living at Scetis, two young strangers came down there. One had a beard, the other was beginning to grow one. They came towards me saying: 'Where is Abba Macarius' cell?' I said to them: 'What do you want with him?' They replied, 'We have heard tell of him and of Scetis, and we have come to see him.' I said to them, 'I am he.' Then they bowed low to me and said, 'We want to live here.' Seeing that they were delicate and had been brought up in comfort, I said to them, 'You cannot live here.' The elder said, 'If we cannot live here, we will go somewhere else.' Then I said to myself, 'Why chase them away and be a stumbling block to them? Suffering will make them go away of their own accord.' So I said to them, 'Come and make yourselves a cell, if you can.' They said, 'Show us a place, and we will make one.'" Abba Macarius gave them an axe, a basket full of bread and salt, and showed them a lump of rock, saying, "Cut out some stones here, and bring wood from the marsh, make a roof, and live here." He added, "I thought they would choose to go away, because of the hardship. But they asked me what work they should do here. I replied, 'Rope-making.' And I took some leaves from the marsh and showed them the rudiments of weaving and how to handle the reeds. I said to them, 'Make some baskets, give them to the keepers, and they will bring you bread.' Then I went away. But they, with patience, did all that I had told them and for three years they did not come to see me. Now I wrestled with my thoughts, thinking, 'What is their way of life? Why do they not come to ask me about their thoughts? Those who live far off come to see me, but these who live quite close do not come. They do not go to anyone else either; they only go to church, in silence, to receive the Oblation.' I prayed to God, fasting the whole week, the He would show me their way of life. At the end of the week, I got up and went to visit them, to see how they were. When I knocked, they opened the door and greed me in silence. Having prayed, I sat down. The elder one made a sign to the younger to go out and he sat plaiting the rope, without saying anything. At the ninth hour, he knocked, and the younger one returned and made a little soup and set the table at a sign of his elder brother. He put three small loaves on it and stood in silence. As for me, I said, 'Rise and let us eat.' We got up to eat and he brought a small water-bottle and we drank. When the evening came, they said to me, 'Are you going away?' I replied, 'No, I will sleep here.' They spread a mat for me on one side, another for themselves in the opposite corner. They took off their girdles and cowls, and lay down together on the mat. When they were settled, I prayed God that He would show me their way of life. Then the roof opened and it became as light as day, but they did not see the light. When they thought I was asleep, the elder tapped the younger on the side and they got up, put on their girdles again and stretched their hands towards heaven. I could see them, but they could not see me. I saw the demons coming like flies upon the younger one, some sitting on his mouth and others on his eyes. I saw the angel of the Lord circling round about him with a fiery sword, chasing the demons far from him. But they could not come near the elder one. When early dawn came, they lay down and I made as though I had just woken up and they did the same. The elder simply said to me, 'Shall we recite the twelve psalms?' and I said to him, 'Yes.' The younger one chanted five psalms in groups of six verses and an alleluia and at each verse a tongue of flame came out of his mouth and ascended to heaven. Likewise with the elder, when he opened his mouth to chant it was like a column of fire which came forth and ascended up to heaven; in my turn, I recited a little by heart. As I went out, I said, 'Pray for me.' But they bowed without saying a word. So I learned that the first was a perfect man, but the enemy was still fighting against the younger. A few days later the elder brother fell asleep in the Lord and three days afterwards, his younger brother died too." When the Fathers came to see Abba Macarius, he used to take them to their cell and say, "Come and see the place of martyrdom of the young strangers."



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.*

The Body of Christ

Note: the following article has been written by an anonymous contributor.

It is included here by permission.

25th Sunday after Pentecost Epistle (Eph.4:1-6)

What is our parish's basic purpose? Our purpose is to be what 1 Corinthians 12:27 says we are: "Now you are the body of Christ, and individually members of it." And how are we to live out that purpose? In Colossians 3:17 the Apostle tells us and all Christians, "Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of [i.e., according to the character and will of] the Lord Jesus Christ, giving thanks to God the Father through Him." Our purpose and our method are to be totally yielded souls through whom the risen Jesus can continue His presence and ministry in and to this world.

And that's not easy. Despite being new creations in Christ, we haven't shed completely the lie that "It's my life;" we're not completely cleansed of selfishness, self-centeredness and what St. Ephraim the Syrian calls, our "lust of power," our wanting to be in control and in charge. And that can short-circuit the flow of God's blessing by creating division and disunity. But one of the main key factors in being truly Christ's Church and loving and serving everybody in His Name, is unity.

But what do we mean by "unity"? Well, what we don't mean is a superficial kind of unity only in church on Sunday; nor is it a handholding kind of unity that leads others to say, "Oh isn't that cute; they're getting along!"; even less is it the unity of cultish mind-control and rigid uniformity, a sort of cookie-cutter Christianity. Rather, we're called to a unity that mirrors the unity of the Holy Trinity. In John 17:20-21, the Lord Jesus prays, not just for His first followers, but "for those who will believe in Me through their word: that they all may be one." How? "That they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in us, that the world may believe that You sent Me." Whatever else the word "Trinity" may mean, certainly it means that at the very heart and centre of God's being is community of love. And that is the unity for which we strive and which alone gives us credibility with that unbelieving world to which we're sent to proclaim the Gospel.

Now, that kind of community of love requires two things. Firstly, it requires humility. It may seem odd to think of the Lord God Almighty as humble; but let's not forget how, in Matthew 11:29, God Incarnate invites us to "Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am meek and lowly [humble] of heart, and you will find rest for your souls." In the life of the Trinity, there's no rivalry, no jockeying for position or power, no trying to building me up by putting you down, no "I'm more important than you." There's unity of purpose based on unity of humble love.

And that needs to be our way of being. In Romans 12:3 St. Paul tells us, "For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith." True humility is an accurate read of one's self: an accurate read of one's talents, gifts, and abilities; an accurate read of one's limitations, weaknesses, faults, and sins; an accurate read that every good thing within me is God's gift to me, not anything I created; an accurate read that everything bad in me is something I created; an accurate read that both my gifts and my limitations give general shape to my place in God's plan and scheme of things. The truly humble soul embraces their vocation and position, high or low, as a precious gift from God. And an attitude like that stops conflict and division before it starts.

But if we're to live out our Lord's desire "that they also may be one in Us that the world may believe that You sent Me," along with humility must come clarity about the nature and basis of our unity. And that's where today's Epistle, Ephesians 4:1-6, comes in, because, as our Lord warns us in Mark 3:25, "if a house be divided against itself, that house cannot stand." And that clarity starts in verse 1, where St. Paul begs us to "walk worthy of the calling with which [we] were called." Our being together as the Body of Christ and being together in this parish is not an accident, nor mere social convention nor anything else of human creation; it is ordained of God. One author puts it this way: "The congregation is not an association of like-minded individuals who bring themselves together because of a common interest (namely, the worship of God). It is not the people who take the initiative in the formation of the congregation. Rather, the congregation is the people whom God gathers together to feed with His word." In John 15:16 the Lord Jesus insists, "You have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you, and appointed you, that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain." Yes, we made and are continuing to make the free choice to listen to the voice of God; but the initiative is His, not ours. It's God Who, says 1 Peter 2:9, has "called us out of darkness into His marvelous light." And that word "walk" refers to just putting one foot in front of the other day by day, making our calling our way of living.

What does that look like? In the verses that follow, Paul describes for us what it means to "walk worthy," what it looks like to be Church. In verses 2-3 he says we're to walk "With all lowliness [humility] and meekness [with our strengths, our energies, our passions, and our emotions firmly surrendered to God's control], with longsuffering [patience], bearing with one another in love; endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." Again, living our unity requires humility: admitting that I don't have all the answers; admitting that my way of thinking is a work in progress; refraining from insisting on my own way just because it's my way. True humility says two things at one and the same time: "I'm infinitely important to God, Who loves me as if there were only me to love;" and "I'm just one piece of the puzzle, shaped by God to fit where He knows I belong."

Along with lowliness comes "meekness." As we've said before, "meekness" does not mean weakness; it means "strength under control," specifically, under God's control. Meekness, like humility, is also necessary for the preservation of unity. We sometimes say a person has a "strong personality." Well, strong personalities are OK---so long as they're under control. Where there are strong personalities, but no meekness, there can be no unity, only a fight for dominance. And make no mistake: true meekness comes only from entering into spiritual warfare, into honest prayer and fasting, to surrender control of my whole self to God. That doesn't happen over night; but if we're not at least in the process of ceasing to defend our passions ("Well, that's just the way I am") and instead seeking God's control over me, we'll achieve neither unity nor love.

And the fact that we're none of us finished products but still very much in process is why Paul calls us to have "longsuffering" and to "bear with one another in love." Being patient has to do with how we respond to the faults, mistakes, weaknesses, and limitations of others; "forbearance" means that putting up with the faults, mistakes, weaknesses, and limitations of others is not a one-time act, but an ongoing practice that's only possible where there is love: a getting out of ourselves to care genuinely and passionately about the well-being of the other. Love is the foundation which makes all of the other characteristics possible. Like it or not, the Church is made up of people with different temperaments, different tastes, and different habits. And these differences aren't necessarily bad. Unity does not require that we become identical to one another in every way imaginable; but managing those differences does require patience, tolerance and love...

And keeping our eye on what the ground, the basis, of our unity really is: the reality that there is only "one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, Who is above all and through all and in all." Our unity is not grounded in our being all like each other, but in us each cooperating with the Holy Spirit as the Spirit seeks to make all of us like Christ. It's our union with Christ that provides the basis for our being united with one another. So unless I'm truly united with Christ, I can never be united with His Church. Look: our unity is based, not on any human commonality (same ethnicity, social status, economic level, educational level, or whatever), but on the fact that we as Christians share the same Holy Spirit and the same calling to be like Christ. We share the same Lord Jesus, the same God and Father of all, the same hope, the same faith, the same baptism---all of which are not of our making, but are gifts of God to us through Jesus Christ. And it's by focusing, not on where we differ, but on what, by God's grace and gifting, we share, that we experience in real time the community of love and the effectiveness of a healthy and functioning body that God intends us to enjoy. So just where is our focus today?

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