

Next Services

**Saturday
December 16th**

Great Vespers at 5:00 pm

**Sunday
December 17th**

Divine Liturgy at 10:00 am

both at

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

All welcome!

Christmas Service Schedule:

**Saturday
December 23rd**

Great Vespers at 5:00 pm

**Sunday
December 24th**

Divine Liturgy at 10:00 am

and

**Great Vespers of the Nativity
at 5:00 pm**

**Monday
December 25th**

Divine Liturgy at 10:00 am



It was so beautiful after Vespers last night to see the Gurrea boys soaking up knowledge of Saint Menas and venerating two different icons of Saint Nicholas. Fr. Luke gave a special impromptu sermon especially for them!

A Special Message from our Parish Council President:

Dear St. Olympia Parishioner:

Last year, I called upon each of you to accept Christ's challenge to live as Christian Stewards. You accepted this challenge beautifully, and we now have services twice every week (Great Vespers every Saturday at 5pm and Divine Liturgy every Sunday at 10am) and on many major Feast Days, we house our beloved priest here in St. Lawrence County each Saturday night, we now have the respectable start of a building fund, and so much more for which to be both very proud and very thankful.

We also have many more ways in which we can grow. What more is our Lord calling you to do, as a steward of all the blessings He has given you? Is He calling you to come to Liturgy more regularly? To Vespers? To more services on Feast Days, or during Holy Week and Pascha? Is there a ministry which He is calling you to participate in? Would you like to serve the children or young people of our little parish? To collect food, clothing, or other items for needy people in our community? To reach out to people who are lonely? To share the richness of our Faith, or of our cultural backgrounds with our larger community in some way?

At this time of year, one of giving and thanksgiving for all our many blessings, I call you once again to reflect also on our all-important Sacrament of Holy "Eucharist", which is rooted in the Greek word for "thank you." We have so much to be thankful for, and all is from our Lord! The way we say "thank you" as Christians, is by Stewardship. I now ask you to join me in reflecting prayerfully on what St. Olympia Orthodox Church and our fellowship means to your life and to the spiritual life of your family, and to ask our Lord to guide you to increase your contribution to this church and to its growth in the new year and beyond. As you do so, please think not only of financial stewardship, but also of giving of your time and talents.

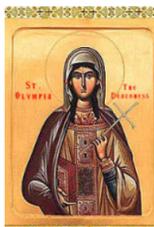
On behalf of the Parish Council of St. Olympia Church, I ask you to complete a Stewardship Pledge card for 2018 (attached to this e-mail as a .pdf document), and return it at your earliest convenience, prior to the end of the year, so that we may plan our budget accordingly. If you have an idea for how you would like to serve our parish, write it on your pledge card, or speak with me or with any parish council member.

I sincerely hope that you will continue to think of this call to Stewardship as an opportunity to help our church community grow and to reach others, to be good and faithful stewards of the awesome gift of St. Olympia Orthodox Church, and to give back to our Lord for all that He has given each of us. I look forward to continue working together with each of you as a family led by Christ, to fulfill His vision!

Love in Christ,

Cynthia Eyer
Parish Council President

**What shall I render unto the Lord for
all that He hath rendered unto me?
Psalm 115:12**



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.**

God's Armor

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

27th Sunday after Pentecost (Eph.6:10-17)

In today's Epistle, Ephesians 6:10-17, St. Paul's letter to assemblies of believers in Ephesus and throughout the great cities of Asia Minor, draws to a close. But never one to skip an occasion to teach, the Apostle offers a final extended metaphor for how a person with true faith in Jesus as God's own Messiah and Lord over all, will need to shape their life as a believer in the middle of a decidedly hostile society: the metaphor of the Christian as a soldier.

Once upon a time, that picture was pretty popular. Most of us in this society have heard at least once in our lives the song "Onward, Christian soldiers, marching as to war." But that militant military image doesn't seem to fit all that well with being a follower of One Who called Himself "meek and humble of heart." So it's important to remember that the people to whom St. Paul was writing were very much a minority group in their time. Their faith in, and their allegiance and loyalty to, Jesus Christ set them at conspicuous odds with the allegiances of others in their own families, neighborhoods, and cities. For these folks, a certain kind of armor to protect them against stresses, hostility and even persecution were surely exactly what they craved.

And the fact that these, our ancestors in the faith, were such an embattled minority should give us cause to pause and think about how you and I look upon and deal with the minorities in our own society. And no, that doesn't mean that we should agree with every or even any of the convictions and/or aspirations of a given minority when those convictions and/or aspirations go against our Christian conscience and sound biblical teaching. But neither have we the right to compel the conscience of another, any more than government or whoever has the right to try to compel our conscience. As tough as it may be sometimes, by God's grace we have to meet that expectation the Lord Jesus lays upon us in Matthew 5:44-45, where He calls us to show ourselves "sons of [our] Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the just and the unjust." Yes, Ephesians 4:15 does tell us to "speak the truth in love." And while that truth may not be what someone else wants to hear, we have to say it anyway; it's not just to pastors but to every believer that, in 2 Timothy 4:2, St. Paul says "Preach the word! Be ready in season [when folks want to listen] and out of season [when folks don't want to listen]." But that truth must be spoken with proven and demonstrated love, proven and demonstrated genuine caring for the well-being of that other person, within a context of respect for that other's conscience and convictions even when...no, especially when...we disagree with them.

OK; so much for the context. Now, then, the first point we have to understand is one made very directly in the events of life in this world, but which most people in this world (including some believers) don't take seriously. Like what? Like the fact that the conflicts in our lives and in our world, the big wars and the little arguments, the terrorist bombing innocent civilians and the two-year-old biting another kid over a toy, are indicative and reflective of warfare at the spiritual level. In verse 12, St. Paul says 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 hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places." The real battle in which we find ourselves is not really against other human beings, but against other dark and dangerous powers who rule the world at the present time. For the Ephesians and for Christians ever since, no matter what hostility is displayed by family or friends or fellow townsfolk or government, we have to get it through our heads and into our hearts that such hostility radiates out from larger, darker, spiritual forces. And there's no way that we in and of ourselves can fight such forces and defeat them; nor is it our task to do so. Rather, our task is to resist those forces of evil rather than surrender to them; by God's empowering grace simply to remain faithful to God and the Gospel. Notice in verse 13 that the Apostle urges us to "take up the whole armor of God, that [we] may be able to withstand [resist] in the evil day, and having done all, to stand [to still be standing firm in our faith in God, regardless of our outer circumstances]." It's God's part to win the ultimate victory over Satan and his servants; it's our part simply to remain faithful and not yield even a fraction of a millimeter.

Now that was good news for those who were no longer able to participate in worship centered on the emperor or any of the gods honored in town, city, or family: the good news that as believers they did not stand alone and forgotten in the difficult places created precisely by their faithfulness to God. Instead, they could trust that they were enrolled with the Lord and the hosts of heaven and protected ultimately, as St. Paul says in verse 10, by God's strength and "the power of His might." And it's the same for us. Spiritual hosts of wickedness still guide and manipulate world rulers of this present age, and sometimes standing for what's right against what's popular can get really lonely. And the temptation is always to see some other human being as "the enemy." But our battle is not with other people. It's with the powers of wickedness in the heavenly places, in the spiritual realm. Still, because Christ is crucified and risen and ascended, says Ephesians 1:20, He is already "seated at [the Father's] right hand in the heavenly places," already both reigning and ruling; so while the powers of evil may still win some battles, they have already lost the war.

However, and no matter how tempting it may be or how much it panders to our own sense of self-righteousness, it is always dangerous indeed to classify those with whom one disagrees as agents of the devil. That's where Inquisitions and so-called "religious wars" come from, because apart from God's grace we sinners inevitably try to turn "the sword of the Spirit" into a sharp metal sword, looking for somebody else to put down, beat up, and feel superior over. If we're to take this Scripture seriously, we must note its three protections against making Ephesians 6 a warrant for warfare on or oppression of our enemies. Firstly, this was written for minority persons; yet most of the time the misuse of this Scripture is by a majority against a minority. Secondly, flesh-and-blood opponents are not those against whom one contends; they're not the real enemy. Thirdly, the very nature of the armor makes it clear that this is a survival strategy for persons of faith in a hostile world, not a strategy for aggression.

After all, the kind of armor St. Paul describes is designed to help soldiers stand fast. And in spiritual warfare, standing fast does not require a person to hurt a neighbor in any way. This is not armor for aggressive action. Instead, it's profoundly defensive. The wide leather belt protects the soldier's vulnerable midsection; the breastplate protects his chest; the boots with cleats help the soldier maintain a solid footing in an often-muddy battleground; the shield protects against arrows, darts, swords and spears; the helmet obviously protects the head. The only equipment for attack is the sword; and here, even that weapon is "the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God;" again, it's speaking God's truth from God's work and speaking it in love. Believers are protected in truth, faith, peace, the Spirit through the word, and in prayer for their defense and strength.

And that leads us to verse 19 which, although not part of our reading, tells us what the point is, what our part is: "that utterance may be given me," says Paul, "that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the Gospel." Now, not every person is expected to stand in the middle of a supermarket and start preaching like Paul. But all of us are meant to live a life of faithfulness in the midst of the battle and to support one another in the midst of difficulty by perseverance in prayer. The armor is for individuals and their lives and for the community so that as a whole we are armed with faith, truth, peace, God's Spirit, and prayer. No one believer alone has to be or is supposed to be some sort of Don Quixote for God in the midst of a godless world, tilting at windmills and not taken seriously. Rather, together as the Body of Christ, and as a parish community in Christ, we are called to considered, corporate resistance to evil by the power of God whenever and wherever evil is embodied in the structures of the world in which we live, in the confidence that the Lord Who lives in the heavenly places has already won the battle.

Putting on the whole armor of God is not meant to create us into an impenetrably insulated community deaf to the cries of others. Nor does it render us invulnerable to change or to hearing the word of God uttered by others. Indeed, in identifying the "mystery of the gospel," and, in verse 18, calling upon believers to "be watchful [remain alert]" and pray for wise speech, the armor of God protects us from confusing standing fast with mindless rigidity. The dark powers adapt readily, eager to draw believers away from a life of faithful love. God's armor empowers believers to see through and resist such manipulation. So just how firm are you and I standing today?

Sayings of the Desert Fathers

A soldier asked Abba Mius if God accepted repentance. After the old man had taught him many things he said, "Tell me, my dear, if your cloak is torn, do you throw it away? He replied, "No, I mend it and use it again." The old man said to him, "If you are so careful about your cloak, will not God be equally careful about his creature?"