

## Next Services

**Saturday  
December 9th**

**Great Vespers at 5:00 pm**

**Sunday  
December 10th**

**Divine Liturgy at 10:00 am**

**both at**

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

**All welcome!**



**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.**

## To What Purpose?

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

*It is included here by permission.*

### 26th Sunday after Pentecost Epistle (Eph 5:8-19)

What is life, your life, my life, all about? We eat, we sleep, we work, we talk; but to what purpose? We have only one life to live; so what will our lives look like when we're done? A wise soul once said that the tragedy of life is not that it ends so soon, but that we wait so long to begin it, in large part because we keep thinking, "Well, there's always tomorrow." But there isn't always a tomorrow, not in this life anyway. So how do we make the most of the 60, 70, or 80 or more years that most of us will live?

Well, making the most of life actually begins, not with doing anything particularly, but by asking the right questions, the first of which is "What does God want from me?" Since ultimately God is the One Who gives us this gift of life, He is really the only one who can answer the question of what's expected of me during my life. In answer, listen again to part of this morning's Epistle, Ephesians 5:8-19. In verses 15-17, St. Paul tells us "See then that you walk circumspectly [carefully, purposefully, not carelessly], not as fools but as wise [not as unwise and witless, but as wise, sensible, intelligent people], redeeming the time [making the most of your time, buying up every opportunity], because the days are evil [there are always problems and troubles]. Therefore, do not be unwise [vague, foolish, thoughtless], but understand what the will of the Lord is."

Pay extra-careful attention to "walk circumspectly," "live purposefully," in that verse, because that is the kind of life God expects us to live; a life that is lived and guided by His purposes. Do you and I have dreams, especially when we're younger, about all the things we want to accomplish in and with our lives? Of course we do. Each of us sees the face in our mirror as having a purpose, something we live for; something set up as an object or end to be attained. That purpose may be pretty simple: being a good husband or wife, being a good parent, providing for one's family, and so on. But each and every one of our dreams and envisioned purposes has a caveat attached: our purposes need to fit into God's purposes for us. Remember, when Ephesians 2:10 refers to those "good works which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them," St. Paul's giving more than a general statement that applies to everybody. He's also saying that from all eternity God tailor-made a purpose and works that fits us individually and personally, a share in His redemptive action that only I individually and personally can fulfill.

But for all of us, the answer to "What does God want from me?" is really simple: He wants all of me, my whole life; all of you, your whole life. In Romans 6:13 St. Paul urges us, "Do not present your members [your body, your mind, your whole self] as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God." That means give myself and yourself completely, give our whole body, our whole being: not just part of it, not 70%, not even 99.9%, but give everything we are to God. That is what God wants from you and me. God wants it all.

Try this test: if one day, one 24-hour period, is 100%, then how much of that do I talk with God, spend time intentionally with God, think about God and/or what God had for me to do that day? Forget how much did I do for God in a day, just how much do I think about Him, or talk to Him, or listen to Him? For most of us, other than being in church, our best would be less than an hour, wouldn't it? How could I be giving my whole life completely to God if I was only just thinking about him less than 10% of the time? Popular Christian writer C.S. Lewis once wrote: "The only thing Christianity cannot be is moderately important." In other words, if Christianity is true, then it deserves our whole life; but if it's not true, if it's just fiction, then we should burn all our Bibles and live any way we see fit. Either way it cannot be something that we ride the fence on. The goal (which admittedly takes time to attain unto) is either all or nothing.

That might be a scary thing for some of us; and it is a big decision to go all out with and for God. What will He ask me to do? What will it cost me? And we'd better believe the enemy of our souls is going to feed us false answers to make us distrust God. But God does not change; He is "the same, yesterday, today, yes, and forever." And if we look at the stories of the people in the Bible from Moses to Matthew, and from Paul to people today, we'll see that God is a loving Father who protects and provides for those who say to Him, "God, it's all yours." But it does have to be all His, as our Lord warns us in Matthew 6:24, "You cannot serve two masters; you will hate one and love the other; you will be loyal to one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money" (or anything else that's not God). We cannot tell God that we'll follow His plans for our life and at the same time follow our plans for our life. So for each of us, the question is "Who's in charge of my life? Who plans my day? Who sets my priorities? Who gets my time?" So, what does God want from me? Everything.

The second question we need to ask is: "What does it take?" What does it take to give God my all? Well, there are spiritual disciplines or exercises that we can do each day that will make this enormous task of giving our whole life to God a lot more manageable, as long as they're done consistently, not sporadically. Proverbs 10:17 says that "he who keeps instruction [who practices discipline] is in the way of life." Jogging 15 feet once a year is no way to train to run a marathon. That's why in 1 Timothy 4:7 the Apostle tells the young Bishop Timothy, "exercise yourself toward godliness [spend your time and energy in the exercise of keeping spiritually fit]."

So what are some of these exercises? First, let go of the things that aren't important. We're always soooo busy, you and I; but will what we're busy with matter in 50 years, or even next month? Hebrews 12:1 bids us "lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us;" So what are the weights in your schedule or mine that keep us from making real progress with God? And hand-in-hand with that is putting first things first. When it comes time to choose between doing a good thing, and doing the best thing, choose the best thing even if it's more work. Be the smart investor who chooses to invest self in the thing that will pay off not only in this life, but also in the next. And yeah, it can be tough setting priorities and discerning that that best thing is. But in Philippians 2:13 the Apostle assures us that "it is God Who works in [us] both to will [to want] and to do for His good pleasure;" He's always at work in us to make us willing and able to fulfill His own purposes. Our part is to ask God to give us the help we need to make the right priorities.

Looking back, what God wants from us is everything; and what that takes is consistent discipline, spiritual exercises. But the final question is: "Why should I do it?" If I've got only one life to live, why should I do with it what God wants me to do, rather than what I want to do? Why not "eat, drink and be merry; for tomorrow we die"? The answer is not only because "it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment;" that we have to give to God, the Author of our life, an accounting of and for our life, and therefore we dread the loss of heaven and the pains of hell. That's all true enough, I suppose; but fear and judgment and rules and punishment are not the fundamental shape of our relationship with God. Rather, says Romans 5:8, "God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." When we had a problem that kept us from having a true relationship with the God Who is love; when we had a sin problem that sentenced us to eternal death, Jesus came "not to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many." When we were "dead in trespasses and sins" and "were by nature children of wrath," Jesus loved us so much that He "became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross," that we might live and be forgiven and be set free from our wrong choices and mistakes.

In Jesus, the Father gave us His all, so that we might have a real, personal relationship of love with Him. Without God in Christ "reconciling the world to Himself," we had no life, no hope, no peace, no way to God, no way to life without end, no way to a life of eternal purpose and significance, and above all else no way to experience for ourselves a love that is eternally unconditional and absolute, despite all our screw-ups. But in Christ, the Father put Himself all out there; He put it all on the line, so that we might give Him our all in faithful love and committed service to His plan and purposes to heal a broken creation. That's something kind of worth committing our life to, don't you think?

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### SAINTS PETER AND PAUL CHURCH SYRACUSE NY

DECEMBER 16, 2017 ~ 9:30 AM



In commemoration of the 100th Anniversary of the Restoration of the Moscow Patriarchate – the Election and Enthronement of Patriarch Tikhon to the throne of Moscow and All Russia – Archbishop MICHAEL will celebrate the "Akathist to Saint Tikhon" in the presence of a reliquary with the relics of the saint.

Clergy and faithful are invited to attend this wonderful and unique opportunity to come and pray together in Syracuse NY (Saints Peter & Paul Church) with our Archbishop on Saturday, 16 December 2017, at 9:30 a.m., and venerate the relics of the saint who was most foundational to the establishment and growth of the Orthodox Church in America.

A retreat presentation by Archbishop Michael, "The Fullness of the Church" will follow the Akathist.

The event information is featured on the diocesan website, [nynjoca.org](http://nynjoca.org)  
Reminder: web addresses in this bulletin are not active links!

### "The Fullness of the Church"

Presented by Archbishop MICHAEL  
Diocese of New York and New Jersey

9:30 am - Akathist

First session

Light Lunch Provided

Second Session

Confessions

5 pm Great Vespers

RSVP by leaving a message at 315.468.0442 (for meal planning purposes, please)



### Creating Opportunity in Greece

Greece suffers the highest rate of unemployment in Europe -- 47%. With a lack of employment opportunities and resources, youth become more susceptible to risks such as migration and exploitation.

With partner First Church Aid, the CODES + CREATE project brought together local and refugee youth to learn valuable digital skills that help them realize their potential and seek towards future opportunities. The experience has also facilitated interaction and communication across languages and cultures. "It's nice to have a place in the city where I feel welcome," said one refugee participant.

CODES + CREATE taught students beginner and advanced level coding, computer programming, and digital content creation, as well as allowed students to design and program a 3D robot with their new skills. The project offered weekly assignments, quizzes, and access to the learning lab, where students could practice their skills and experiment while spending time with peers in a safe space.

"I like everything about the class. I'm very thankful to my teachers and all other staff!" said one student, after completing the program.

Providing education and job skills to youth is only one way in which your generosity makes a vital difference. Please give today so we can continue to help those in need around the world.

DONATE TODAY

P.S. You can also help provide relief to the people of Greece by donating to our [Greece campaign](http://www.iocc.org/greece). Your donation will go far as far thanks to The Jahan Family Foundation, Inc., which will match the first \$1 million in donations through February 28, 2018.

\*Organization for Economic Co-operation & Development

To donate, go to <https://www.iocc.org/greece>

[iocc.org/greece-to-give](https://www.iocc.org/greece)

## Sayings of the Desert Fathers

Abba Moses sent seven instructions to Abba Poemen including:

If the monk does not think in his heart that he is a sinner, God will not hear him. The brother asked, "What does this mean, to think in his heart that he is a sinner?" Then Abba Moses said, "When someone is occupied with his own faults, he does not see those of his neighbor."

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If a man's deeds are not in harmony with his prayer, he labors in vain. The brother said, "What is this harmony between practice and Prayer? The old man said, "We should no longer do those things against which we pray. For when a man gives up his own will, then God is reconciled with him and accepts his prayers." The brother asked, "In all the affliction which the monk gives himself, what helps him?" The old man said, "It is written, 'God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.'" (Ps 46:1)

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

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A brother questioned Abba Matoes, "What ought I to do when a brother comes to see me and it is a fast day, or in the morning? This worries me." The old man said to him, "If you don't fuss about it and simply eat with the brother, that is all right, but if you are not expecting anyone and you eat, that is your own will."

\* \* \*

A brother questioned Aba Matoes saying, "What am I to do? My tongue makes me suffer, and every time I go among men, I cannot control it, but I condemn them in all the good they are doing and reproach them with it. What am I to do?" The old man replied, "If you cannot contain yourself, flee into solitude. For this is a sickness. He who dwells with brethren must not be square, but round, so as to turn himself towards all." He went on, "It is not through virtue that I live in solitude, but through weakness; those who live in the midst of men are the strong ones."