

# Week of July 23rd 2017

You can reach Fr. Luke at [rlukacs@gmail.com](mailto:rlukacs@gmail.com)

For emergencies, phone (315) 322-8425

Please leave a clear message and include your phone number

## Next Services

**Saturday, July 29th**  
Great Vespers at 5:00 pm

Fr. Luke is available to hear confessions following the service

**Sunday, July 30th**  
Divine Liturgy at 10:00 am

followed by

## St. Olympia Feast Day Celebration and Parish Picnic

Grilled hot dogs and hamburgers, buns, condiments, paper goods, plastic ware, ice and some beverages will be provided.

If possible, bring your own chairs, favorite beverage and a dish to share. Most importantly, come to celebrate the feast day of our patron saint!

St. Olympia Chapel  
123 Main Street  
Potsdam, NY  
All welcome!

## Sayings from the Desert Fathers

[Abba Isaiah said], "A beginner who goes from one monastery to another is like an animal who jumps this way and that, for fear of the halter."

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He also said to those who were making a good beginning by putting themselves under the direction of the holy Fathers, "As with purple dye, the first coloring is never lost." And, "Just as young shoots are easily trained back and bent, so it is with beginners who live in submission."

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He also said that when there was an *agape* and the brethren were eating in the church and talking to one another, the priest of Pelusia reprimanded them in these words, "Brethren, be quiet. For I have seen a brother eating with you and drinking as many cups as you and his prayer is ascending to the presence of God like fire."

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He also said, "When God wishes to take pity on a soul and it rebels, not bearing anything and doing its own will, He then allows it to suffer that which it does not want, in order that it may seek Him again."

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The same Abba Isaiah, when someone asked him what avarice was, replied, "Not to believe that God cares for you, to despair of the promises of God and to love boasting."

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He was also asked what calumny is and he replied, "It is ignorance of the glory of God, and hatred of one's neighbor."

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He was also asked what anger is and he replied, "Quarreling, lying and ignorance."

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It was said of Abba Isaiah that one day he took a branch and went to the threshing-floor to thresh and said to the owner, "Give me some wheat." The later replied, "Have you brought in the harvest, Father?" He said "No." The owner said to him, "How then can you expect to be given wheat, if you have not harvested?" Then the old man said to him, "So then if someone does not work, he does not receive wages?" The owner replied, "No." At that, the old man went away. Seeing what he had done, the brethren bowed before him, asking him to tell them why he had acted thus. The old man said to them, I did this as an example: whoever has not worked will not receive a reward from God."

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Abba Elias, the presbyter, said, "If the spirit does not sing with the body, labor is in vain."

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He also said, "What can sin do where there is penitence? And of what use is love where there is pride?"

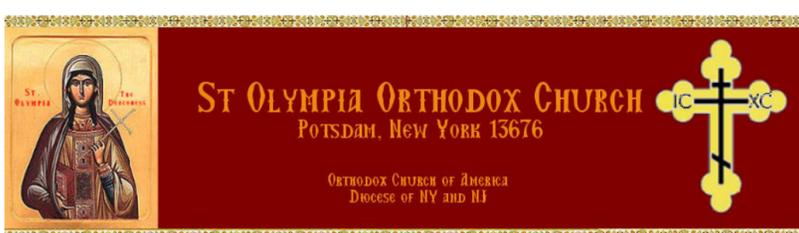
## Planning Ahead

**Parish Rummage Sale to benefit our building fund Saturday, August 26, 2017**

Please collect items that you can contribute to this fund raiser. We ask that you pre-price these items before you bring them.

**Archbishop Michael's next visit to Potsdam will be:**

**Saturday-Sunday, September 9-10, 2017**



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.

Visit us on Facebook or [www.saintolympiorthodoxchurch.org](http://www.saintolympiorthodoxchurch.org)

## Our Orthodox Family

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

When I was growing up, in our house the basic rule was simple: family comes first. Above and ahead of all else came parents, siblings, aunts and uncles (even if we weren't talking to them at the time), cousins-six-times-removed on three different continents; family comes first. And even though through much of my childhood, my father was at work far more than he was at home, grabbing all the overtime he could get, nonetheless he was doing it to provide more for his family than just the bare necessities, because ahead of the individual (and in this case his need for sleep), family comes first. And most of us get that...

...except when it comes to God's family, the Church. Then, most of us have trouble wrapping our heads around the fact that together in Christ we are a real family. Instead, we tend to see ourselves as only loosely connected to each other, as in an organization whose membership is purely voluntary and whose meetings and functions are purely optional, rather than as interconnected and interdependent cells in one and the same organism, brothers and sisters in one and the same family. That total misunderstanding of Christian faith and Christian community gets expressed in several ways. The first is that doctrine of demons that "You don't have to go to church to be a Christian," which is flagrantly disobedient to the command in Hebrews 10:25 not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together. Another is the way some folks join a parish with enthusiasm but, as they discover they cannot remodel the parish into their image and likeness, according to their priorities, slip away and eventually make some other parish their home, where the process starts all over again. And there are those folks who stomp out if the parish meeting makes a decision with which they disagree. More pernicious is a given earthly family which essentially isolates itself from the life of the parish family. Oh yes, they show up faithfully for "church;" but when it comes to fellowship or participating in an occasional parish event which cuts into their family Sunday dinner or family party or outing, they do a vanishing act, not just once in a while, but consistently---clearly indicating by their choices that they do not see themselves as a real part of the parish family. And there are clergy suffering from "the grass is greener" syndrome, assuming that just over the hill or in the next province or in Lower Slobovia they'll find that "perfect" parish, with perfect people. So they're unable to settle anywhere, and never really give themselves to the people entrusted to their care.

But none of this is the teaching of Sacred Scripture. Let's begin at the beginning. None of us, by reason of our physical birth, is born as a child of God: a creature, yes; but a child, no. Rather, says Ephesians 2:3, we're born "by nature children of wrath." That's why John 1:12 insists that it is to "as many as received Him [Jesus], to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name." By God's grace, says the Lord Jesus in John 3:3 and 5, in our Baptism we are "born again...of water and the Spirit;" and as Romans 8:15 reminds us, we "received the Spirit of adoption, by Whom we cry out 'Abba, Father.'" But we're not born spiritually as an only child; spiritually we're born into a family, God's family. Note how 1 Corinthians 12:13 insists that "by one Spirit we were all baptized into one Body--whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves of free--and have all been made to drink into one Spirit." 2 Corinthians 6:18 says that in Jesus Christ God assures you and me, "I will be a Father to you, and you shall be My sons and daughters, says the LORD Almighty," while Galatians 3:26 says bluntly, "For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus." The clear teaching of Scripture is that we form what Galatians 6:10 calls "the household [family] of faith," not as a theoretical possibility in the future but an absolute reality here and now in time and heading into eternity. In animal rescue and adoption, one often hears talk of this puppy or kitty finding its "forever family." Well, look around! These behind you, in front of you, to either side of you, are your brothers and sisters, closer to you, more tightly knit to you, in the Body of Christ than your blood kin can ever be. Look around: these are your and my "forever family," the brothers and sisters through whose veins flows the same blood as through yours: the shed blood of Jesus Christ. That's just plain, simple, and inescapable fact.

Ah, but what will you and I do with that fact? Our answer is in Romans 12:6-14. In verse 5 St. Paul says that "we, being many, are one Body in Christ, and individually members of one another;" then in verse 6 he says, "Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them." The first thing we're to do with the fact that we're family is to serve one another, simply because, as a friend loves to say, "Love is as love does." By the Holy Spirit each and every one of us has received at least one gift which God intends us to use for the good of all. And using those gifts is not doing somebody else a favor; it's fulfilling a duty we owe them. Washing the dishes, taking out the garbage, mowing the lawn, dusting, vacuuming, and helping financially are all our duty to our family. And each of us using our gift or gifts to serve one another is simply our duty to the family of God. Action, you see, shapes attitudes.

So St. Paul also addresses our attitudes towards our brothers and sisters in the Body of Christ, our attitudes towards God, and our attitudes to those outside who are our potential brothers and sisters in Christ. In verse 9, he says, "Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil. Cling to what is good. Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another." Most of us have learned how to pretend to love others: how to speak kindly, avoid hurting their feelings, appearing to take an interest in them, maybe even put on the appearance of compassion for others. But God calls us to go beyond the external appearance to the inward reality of a genuine and sincere love by which we invest our very self in the well-being of others; a love which demands of us concentration and effort, helping others when they need it and not just when it's convenient to us, sharing our money, our time, our personal involvement. My brothers and sisters in the household of faith are not just people I have to get along with; they're people who have a right to a piece of me. And in order to love "without hypocrisy," we do indeed have to "abhor what is evil," to recognize, be revolted by, and hate what is sin and selfishness in us; and then by God's grace "cling to what is good" and godly in our fundamental values, priorities and daily choices. Doing so leads us to "Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love." The word here translated as "brotherly love" is *philóstorgos*, a compound word combining *philia*, "friendship," and *storgee*, "family love;" so it means "family members who love each other and are friends with each other." Living our life as the family of God involves and demands investing at least as much time, interest and caring in each other as we invest in our bowling-league buddies.

But we cannot serve one another, love without hypocrisy, abhor evil, cling to what is good, actually care about one another, solely in our own strength, but only by the constant flow of God's empowering grace into us and through us. That's why in verse 11 St. Paul bids be "not lagging in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord." Only when we finally get through our heads and hearts that in loving others we're loving God, that in serving others we're serving God, and that we cannot do either in our own strength, do we recognize our need to open ourselves up wide enough for God to fill us with Himself and to ask Him day after day, and sometimes minute by minute, to live His divine life through us. Because our own ego keeps getting in the way, that's never easy. So we do need to hang in there, trusting God, "rejoicing in hope [confident trust in God's highest willingness], patient in tribulation, continuing steadfastly in prayer."

And because the family of God is open-ended, always with room for one more; and because it's our part and privilege to be the instruments by which new people are added to the Lord, we're called to show the world around us of what a child of God looks like by demonstrating concrete, practical love, by "distributing to the needs of the saints [showing how we take care of each other];" by being "given to hospitality" and by "blessing those who persecute you; bless and do not curse." And by the way, the Greek word for "given" in "given to hospitality" actually means "pursuing, chasing after, hunting down," while the word translated as "hospitality," *philoxenia*, literally means "befriending strangers." So we're not to just resignedly accept the task of caring for whomever God drops on our doorstep, but actually to go out eagerly looking for people for whom to care.

Bottom line: in Jesus Christ, by reason of our Baptism, you and I form one forever family. That's not open to debate; it's just plain fact, and an eternal fact to boot. The only question is what kind of family members do you and I choose to be: brothers and sisters who make our Father proud in the love and caring we show to one another, or children who make our Father grieve over our selfishness and dysfunction? It's your choice...and mine too.

Thank you to Gregoria Karides Suchy who has donated three Byzantine crosses from Ravenna to adorn the top of our iconostasis.

