

# Week of July 30th 2017

You can reach Fr. Luke at  
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For emergencies, phone  
(315) 322-8425

Please leave a clear  
message and include your  
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## Next Services

### Saturday, August 5th

Great Vespers at 5:00 pm

Fr. Luke is available to hear  
confessions following the service

### Sunday, August 6th Tranfiguration of our Lord on Mount Tabor

Divine Liturgy at 10:00 am

St. Olympia Chapel  
123 Main Street  
Potsdam, NY

All welcome!



Congratulations to Zachary Farbanish who received his Master's Degree in Engineering and Management from Clarkson's Beacon, NY, campus this past weekend. Zachary also has his undergraduate degree from Clarkson and was part of our St. Olympia family when he was in Potsdam. He is shown above with his father, Gregory Farbanish, and his grandfather Basil Farbanish, who has been a very generous benefactor of our parish.

## Sayings from the Desert Fathers

Amma Theodora was a great ascetic of the desert. She may have been the wife of a tribune but at some point she renounced wealth and comfort, and headed to the desert. Many male monastics consulted her for spiritual guidance.

Amma Theodora said, "Let us strive to enter by the narrow gate. Just as the trees, if they have not stood before the winter's storms cannot bear fruit, so it is with us; this present age is a storm and it is only through many trials and temptations that we can obtain an inheritance in the kingdom of heaven."

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Again, she said this, "A Christian discussing the body with a Manichean expressed himself in these words, "Give the body discipline and you will see that the body is for Him who made it."

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The same amma said that a teacher ought to be a stranger to the desire for domination, vain-glory, and pride; one should not be able to fool him by flattery, nor blind him by gifts, nor conquer him by the stomach, nor dominate him by anger; but he should be patient, gentle and humble as far as possible; he must be tested and without partisanship, full of concern, and a lover of souls.

\* \* \*

She also said that neither asceticism, nor vigils nor any kind of suffering are able to save, only true humility can do that. There was an anchorite who was able to banish the demons; and he asked them, "What makes you go away? Is it fasting?" They replied, "We do not eat or drink." "Is it vigils?" They replied, "We do not sleep." "Is it separation from the world?" "We live in the deserts." "What power sends you away then?" They said, "Nothing can overcome us, but only humility." Do you see how humility is victorious over the demons?

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The same amma was asked about the conversations one hears. "If one is habitually listening to secular speech, how can one yet live?" She said, "Just as when you are sitting at table and there are many courses, you take some but without pleasure, so when secular conversations come your way, have your heart turned towards God and, thanks to this disposition, you will hear them without pleasure, and they will not do you any harm."

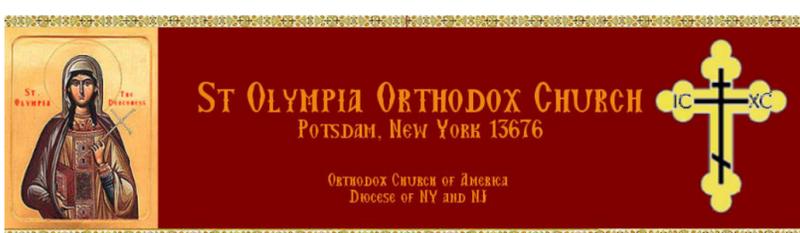
## Planning Ahead

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-raise 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)



A few  
photos from  
our feast-day  
picnic  
celebration

## God as Trinity

Note: the following article has been written by an anonymous contributor, who in turn credits someone else known only as T.C. It is included here with permission.

This reflection focuses on the reality of God as Trinity. And let's start that reflection in a seemingly-odd place. In English we often use the word "awe" to describe our encounters with the beauty of nature. Consider, for example, what most folks feel the first time they see Jasper: the snow-capped mountains thrusting up from the earth to scratch the sky; the glorious green of the trees; the mountain sheep casually licking salt from the road; the tiny little pika nibbling on the grass of the mountain meadow. The whole thing, so totally overwhelming, demonstrates the truth of Psalm 8:1, "O LORD, our Lord, how excellent is Your name in all the earth, Who have set Your glory above the heavens." And the words "awe" and "fear" are also used in the New Testament to describe people's reactions to Jesus, especially in response to a miracle or healing. Luke 5:26, for example, says that when Jesus forgave and healed the paralytic carried by his four friends, the gathered people who witnessed it "were all amazed, and they glorified God, and were filled with fear [totally shaken], saying, 'We have seen strange things today.'" Many of us, still in recovery from mental images of that scary god so eager to throw people screaming into the fires of hell, prefer not to use the word "fear" in reference to our relationship with God. But being shaken by the reality of God is healthy. It keeps us from taming God down into a slightly senile grandpa. It's only in and through that healthy "fear," that awe and reverence for God, that we can have the joy of entering into that experience of God the prophet records in Isaiah 6:1-8, a vision of God which is actually a manifestation of the Holy Trinity.

"In the year that King Uzziah died," Isaiah records, "I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lifted up, and the train of His robe filled the temple." The date Uzziah died, around 740B.C., is important. That was the year peace and prosperity were threatened by the growing and aggressive Assyrian empire trying to swallow up its neighbours in Syria and Palestine. Israel and Judah were suffering instability and fear, small and vulnerable against the might of Assyria. Yet through this vision God was reminding Isaiah and the people of Who the true King really was, Who was really in charge of this world and its events: the God of power and majesty and holiness.

Isaiah's vision God's glory happened in the temple. He doesn't tell us that his vision came as a result of prayer; but certainly God here chose to reveal Himself to the prophet who was going to speak to God's people in God's name. And what kind of God does the prophet encounter? First, Isaiah encounters the holy God, the Father-God Who cannot be adequately described and in Whose presence awe, even fear, is an appropriate response. Verses 1-4 say, "In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lifted up, and the train of His robe filled the temple. Above it stood seraphim; each one had six wings: with two he covered his face, with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. And one cried to another and said, 'Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory.' And the posts of the door were shaken by the voice of him who cried out, and the house was filled with smoke." Isaiah doesn't try to describe God's appearance, because when all is said and done, there's no human language able and adequate to describe the awesome God. There's no language that we can use, no picture we can create, that can adequately describe God. God is truly "ineffable," beyond our ability to put into words. Scripture uses all sorts of images for God: the Good Shepherd, the true heavenly Father, and so on. But none of them is big enough to give us a complete picture of what God is like. And if as we are right now we actually saw God face to face, our brains wouldn't be able to take Him in.

Even the beings surrounding God are pretty impressive. The Hebrew word "seraph" means "fiery one." Each of the seraphim has six wings, but they only use two for flying. With two they cover their eyes, because Scripture says one cannot see the face of God and live. With two more they cover their feet, which is a Hebrew euphemism for the private parts, because the Old Testament cautions priests against appearing naked before the Lord. And they're calling out to each other in a song of worship: "Holy holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory." We see this again in Revelation 4:8, where the seraphim before the Father's throne, "do not rest day or night, saying: 'Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, Who was and is and is to come!'" And the point is that the living God is truly awesome! We see that demonstrated in Matthew 17:2, in what the disciples see when Jesus is transfigured before them atop Mount Tabor: "His face shone like the sun, and His clothes became as white as the light." This is God: awesome and holy, the Creator of the galaxies, the One Who is completely untouched by evil, and is determined to drive it out of His creation.

Yet He is also loving, merciful, and tender to all, which leads us to the point that Isaiah encounters the forgiving God. When Isaiah sees God in all His majesty and awe and holiness, verse 5 says his first reaction was panic: "So I said: 'Woe is me, for I am undone! Because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for I have seen the King, the LORD of hosts.'" And that, too, was healthy because it was honest. Isaiah didn't try to deny or downplay or rationalize his sins; he faced squarely that his sin and sinfulness made him utterly undeserving of being even in the presence of the thrice-holy God. But God's response to Isaiah's honesty, say verses 6-7, was that, "one of the seraphim flew to me, having in his hand a live coal which he had taken with the tongs from the altar. And he touched my mouth with it, and said: 'Behold, this has touched your lips; your iniquity is taken away, and your sin is purged.'" That coal, taken from the altar where animal sacrifices were burned before the LORD, shows that it's the power of sacrifice that brings forgiveness.

Yes, Hebrews 10:4 tells us that "it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins." But those sacrifices did point to the perfect sacrifice that Jesus, God the Son, would offer when He gave Himself freely on the cross for the sins of the whole world. And that sacrifice touches our lips too. Each time we come forward in faith and repentance to receive Holy Communion, God is telling us "Behold, this has touched your lips; it will take away your iniquity and cleanse you of your sins." We might find ourselves coming up to Communion knowing very well that we haven't loved this all-holy God with our whole heart, haven't loved our neighbour as ourselves, and have only a half-hearted repentance. But we remember how Jesus turned to the criminal who died beside Him and assured him: "Today, you shall be with me in paradise." So we take courage and come forward: empty, needy, utterly unworthy. Yet somehow the miracle happens again; in the Bread of Life and the Cup of Eternal Salvation, God meets our weak and trembling faith with His own healing and life. Does that mean we can or should skip confession or take our sins lightly? No. St. Paul warns in 1 Corinthians 11:27 that "whoever eats this bread and drinks this cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord." But still, let us come, knowing that we meet the forgiving God.

Lastly, Isaiah encounters the sending God. In verse 8 the prophet "heard the voice of the Lord, saying: 'Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us?' Then I said, 'Here am I! Send me.'" God has a message He wants to send out to people everywhere, and by God the Holy Spirit He empowers and equips messengers to take that message to the world. What message? "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." And if, like Isaiah, you and I have experienced for ourselves the wonder and joy of forgiveness and new life, then we too are called to share that news with others. "Whom shall I send?" He wants to send us. Where? He's sending most of us to our families and friends, our work colleagues and neighbours, because you and I may well be the only Bible those folks will read.

God is holy and awesome, far above anything we can imagine. And this holy and awesome God is also the One Who forgives our sins; He came among us in Jesus, Who poured out His blood for all of us on the cross, so that the burden of sin could be lifted from our shoulders. And if we have tasted that free gift of forgiveness, then like Isaiah we also are sent out by the Holy Spirit to tell others about this holy and loving God and to help them come closer to Him for themselves. It is to you personally and to me personally that God says today, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us?" Will you personally and I personally join with Isaiah and say: "Here am I! send me?"