

Week of September 10th 2017

You can reach Fr. Luke at frlukacs@gmail.com

For emergencies, phone (315) 322-8425

Please leave a clear message and include your phone number

Next Services

Saturday September 16th

Great Vespers at 5:00 pm

Sunday September 17th

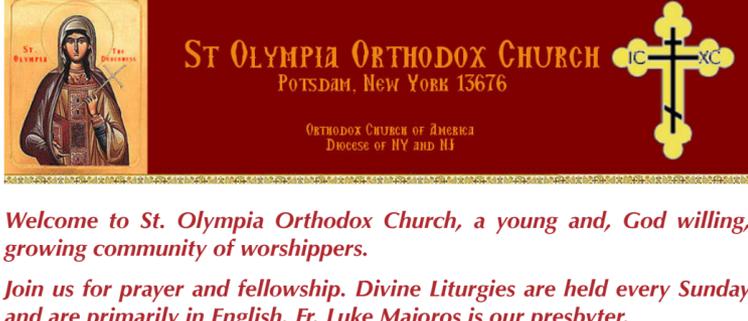
Divine Liturgy at 10:00 am

both at

St. Olympia Chapel
123 Main Street
Potsdam, NY

All welcome!

Please help with disaster relief for those afflicted by Hurricanes Howard and Irma through IOCC (International Orthodox Christian Charities) www.iocc.org



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

Archbishop Michael's and Matushka Natalie Stavrevsky's visit to Potsdam, September 9-10, 2017

more photos at left



Yes and No

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

In one of today's Epistles, 2 Corinthians 1:21-2:4, St. Paul is tackling a problem not unique to him: the problem of the credibility of his ministry. But in order to understand his problem, let's back up to verses 18-22: "But as surely as God is faithful, our message to you is not 'Yes' and 'No.' For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you by me and Silas and Timothy, was not 'Yes' and 'No,' but in Him it has always been 'Yes.' For no matter how many promises God has made, they are 'Yes' in Christ. And so through him the 'Amen' is spoken by us to the glory of God. Now it is God who makes both us and you stand firm in Christ. He anointed us, set his seal of ownership on us, and put his Spirit in our hearts as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come." And the key here is verse 18: "Our message to you is not, 'Yes,' and, 'No.'"

Paul is telling the believers in Corinth that what he had taught was absolutely true, nothing but the straight goods. Why? Because a group of phony teachers had popped up who were talking Paul down. They criticized him to the Corinthians and suggested that Paul didn't teach them all they needed; that there was "secret knowledge" he hadn't shared with them. These apostle-wannabes tried to lead the fledgling church astray, as Paul worries in chapter 11, verses 3-5: "But I am afraid that just as Eve was deceived by the serpent's cunning, your minds may somehow be led astray from your sincere and pure devotion to Christ. For if someone comes to you and preaches a Jesus other than the Jesus we preached, or if you receive a different spirit from the one you received, or a different gospel from the one you accepted, you put up with it easily enough. But I do not think I am in the least inferior to those 'super-apostles.'" So yeah, Paul was trying to demonstrate to the Corinthian believers that the message he had preached was credible and believable because it was real and true.

And this mess in Corinth has exactly what to do with you and me? Everything, because credibility is at the core of the Faith: not Paul's credibility, not my credibility, not your credibility, but God's credibility. Should you and I believe God, and put our full trust in Him, or not? In the Scriptures, and most especially in His incarnate Word, Jesus Christ, does God give us the straight goods? Is God really and truly faithful to His promises?

Why do those questions even come up? In part, because of our experience with other people, who don't always give us the straight skinny. Sometimes folks simply aren't honest. Sometimes they don't want to say what they're really thinking. For example, there's no good answer to the question, "Do these jeans make me look fat?" People also often say, "Yes," when they mean, "No," and "No" when the honest answer is "Yes." People say one thing and do another. And you and I have about the same track-record of honesty as the rest of the world. But the real problem with this rather constant unreliability is that we tend to project the same kind of double-mindedness onto God. We begin to doubt that God will actually do what He says, especially as it pertains to our salvation.

But God is not that way at all. When He says, "No," it means exactly that. If we're tempted to love anything or anyone above God, the commandments tell us, "No;" and God means it. If our anger drives us to despise our parents or to hate another person, the commandments tell us, "No" and God means it. If we're tempted to spread gossip about our neighbor, the commandments tell us, "No;" and God means it. God's "No" is plain, blunt, and unchanging; and going against that "No" is like bashing our head against a concrete wall and expecting the wall to break.

Admittedly, "No," is a hard word for us, especially because for many of us that word has difficult and harsh associations. As adults, we may tend to smile with at least some compassion at the teenager who asks a girl to his first dance and gets turned down. But that boy may well be scarred in his sense of his own self-worth. And I suspect all of us have experienced the crushing "No" of God's answer to a hope and a prayer that, at least at the time, meant the world to us. The fear of "No" surfaces everywhere we turn. Am I good enough, or smart enough, or pretty enough, or secure enough? No! Do I have what it takes to excel in sports, or in my role as a student, or in college, or in my job? No! Is my health OK? No! Does my wife or husband or my mom or dad love me? No! "No" is a hard word.

And the kicker is that all of these doubts merely reflect the fundamental doubt we find in our own hearts. If truth be told, when we gaze into our hearts, we find that we're not right with God; so we doubt we can trust Him. This doubt became a part of our bloodline long, long ago; it's a blight inherited by all of humanity from the disobedience of our first parents, Adam and Eve, which ruptured the relationship between God and humanity. We live in this brokenness, somehow sensing that we are not in right relationship with God; that something between us and God is out of whack. We don't need Romans 3:23 to tell us that "all---including ourselves---have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God," because that truth is embedded in our conscience and our heart. We don't need Ephesians 2:1 to tell us we're "dead in trespasses and sins," because we experience that corpse-like powerlessness for good in every fiber of our being.

But the Good News is that Jesus came to change all that. We know that He took on the burden of our sinfulness with Him to the Cross. We know from the Gospels how in Christ God fulfilled His promises in Isaiah 53:4-5 that His Messiah would willingly take "up our infirmities and carry our sorrows;" that He would be "pierced for our transgressions," and "crushed for our iniquities." Romans 5:1 insists that "having been justified by faith, we have [not could have or might have or will have, but have] peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" And God is at peace with us is because Jesus has paid for every time we disobeyed God's "No:" "The punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed." And as we read in 1 Corinthians 15, Paul had already and fully shared this good news with the Corinthians; but their doubt about God's forgiveness kept surging. That's why they were so susceptible to the false teachers who came to offer them a way, a "secret teaching," a magical formula, to get around the "No" in a way that didn't include the Cross and the Resurrection. And that's also what so often happens in our lives. When doubt surfaces, it brings with it desperation and sometimes hopelessness. Doubt can put us in an "Oh, what's the use?" frame of mind.

And that's exactly it: in verse 20, Paul insists that "no matter how many promises God has made, they are 'Yes' in Christ. And so through Him the 'Amen' [So be it!] is spoken by us to the glory of God." In Christ, because of His Cross and Resurrection, God says "Yes!" to the forgiveness of our sins. God says "Yes!" to our adoption as His own beloved children. God says "Yes!" to making us His heirs, co-heirs with Christ to heavenly glory. God says "Yes!" to being with us even though we often stray. God says "Yes!" to us, His children, rescued from sin and death by His beloved Son, Jesus Christ.

When Jesus walked the earth, God's "Yes" was abundantly visible in the miracles our Lord worked: His healings and forgiving people and guaranteeing Paradise even to a justly-condemned criminal. And God's "Yes" is still among us because by the Spirit Jesus is still among us, honoring His promise "I am with you always, even to the close of the age." As we come forward to confess our sins, we receive, exactly like the paralytic lowered through the roof, God's own word of forgiveness, His "Yes." As we gather around the table to receive the Body and Blood of Christ, God confirms His "Yes!" to us as His children. As we see His Word come together with the waters of Baptism, God is shouting "Yes! You are My child!"

But note how verses 21-22 say, "Now it is God who makes both us and you stand firm in Christ. He anointed us, set His seal of ownership on us, and put His Spirit in our hearts as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come." Talk about "Yes!" Not only are we forgiven; not only are we made heirs of the Kingdom by Jesus; but God seals his, "Yes" in our lives by sealing us, putting his stamp of ownership on us. We become His property. And if the evil one should try to get in our stuff, God says, "Hands off! This believer is Mine" And just in case we need more proof, the Holy Spirit comes into our lives and makes our hearts his home. This deposit of the Holy Spirit in our hearts is a wonderful "Yes!," a living testimony to God's love and forgiveness, and a promise sealed inside of us, a guarantee of everything that God has promised to us in Jesus Christ.

Christ is in our midst!

All of us have seen on our television or computer images of the damage and devastation that has occurred in the southern part of our country as a result of Hurricanes Harvey and Irma. The loss of life, the destruction of property, and the displacement of whole families are staggering.

Of course, I am asking that prayers be offered in all our churches (in the vicinity of the horrific tragedy). But our prayers to the national deity cannot be more than that. It must be what the Lord has asked of us in the Gospel: "Whatever you do for the least of my brethren, you do it for Me" (Matthew 25:40).

To all of the clergy and faithful of the Diocese of New York and New Jersey, International Orthodox Christian Charities (IOCC), which is already responding to the aftermath of both hurricanes.

I am writing that all of you please take up a special collection for IOCC as soon as possible, and thank the work of its volunteers, we are able. Please send your offerings (DIME, DOLL, IOCC), International Orthodox Christian Charities, 110 West Road, Suite 360, Baltimore, MD 21204.

Additionally, parishes are urged to consider authoring much needed items, specifically requested by IOCC, and donating them into emergency kits. They will be delivered to the hurricane victims by IOCC. For parish giving people to charities or other organizations, this can be a meaningful service project or even "faith in action." Prayers will be offered for everyone regarding this option in the very near future.

Once the collection of funds or if there has been completed, the Charities will send out a small form, requesting the amount sent and the number of kits assembled, so that we can track the total contributions of the Diocese of New York and New Jersey.

From the bottom of my heart, I thank you in advance for your faith-filled response to this national disaster, and pray that God will bless you richly for the holy work that you undertake in His Name. With our infinite mercy, Adoration, blessing and grace love.

✠ M I C H A E L ✠
Archbishop of New York and the Diocese of New York and New Jersey

IOCC 25th Anniversary
DIODESE OF NEW YORK AND NEW JERSEY

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Thank you for your tremendous outpouring of prayers and support for those affected by Hurricane Harvey and its aftermath. We ask you to keep those affected by Hurricane Harvey in your prayers and also those now facing Hurricane Irma.

IOCC has been in the region since early last week providing care and will continue to be in the Houston region and Louisiana for weeks and months to come.

IOCC's Frontliner team was the first group to offer emotional and spiritual care in the "mega-shelters" at the George R. Brown Convention Center in downtown Houston, and they remain a steadfast presence there, collectively offering 12 hours of care daily to both survivors and volunteers, as well as to law-enforcement officers, at the center.

The IOCC Emergency Response Van and staff arrived in Houston on 9/1 for a Rapid Needs Assessment, and IOCC's first truck-out team took place on Saturday 9/2. Some 50-75 more houses are slated for assessments in the coming day to see what needs might exist for IOCC truck-out teams in the coming 7-14 days.

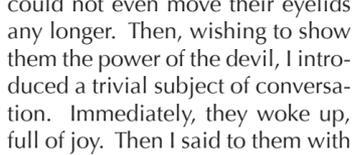
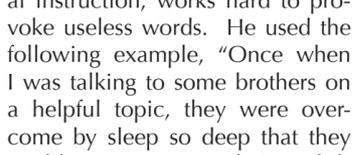
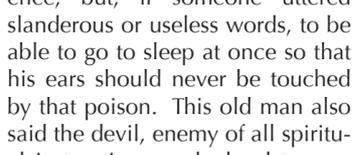
IOCC has arranged, through partners Church World Service and Good360, for two truckloads of hygiene kits, clean-up buckets, food, and baby products to the Houston area, arriving early the week of 9/4/17. IOCC staff is checking in with every Orthodox parish in the region to assess clean-up and other needs. Parishioners who have specific clean-up needs are asked to speak to their parish priest, who will coordinate with IOCC.

How can you help?

- **Make a gift:**
- **Create clean up buckets:** our supply of clean up buckets has been depleted at our warehouse, please consider creating clean up buckets and shipping to our warehouse for distribution. Instructions on creating and shipping kits here: iocc.org/links
- **Sign up to volunteer:** those interested in volunteering for clean-up efforts in the region should register using the form at iocc.org/volunteering. Houston-area volunteers will be of greatest help at the moment. Because we expect this to be a busy hurricane season, there will be additional opportunities for other volunteers.
- **Share our good work:** follow us on our social media channels (IOCC/Relief) and share how IOCC is responding to support people in need.

110 West Road, Suite 360 Baltimore, MD 21204 | Tel: 410.243.8620
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Links in this newsletter are not live. Go to www.iocc.org to contribute.



Sayings from the Desert Fathers

Abba Cassian related with regard to another old man living in the desert, that this father had asked God to grant him never to become sleepy during a spiritual conference, but, if someone uttered slanderous or useless words, to be able to go to sleep at once so that his ears should never be touched by that poison. This old man also said the devil, enemy of all spiritual instruction, works hard to provoke useless words. He used the following example, "Once when I was talking to some brothers on a helpful topic, they were overcome by sleep so deep that they could not even move their eyelids any longer. Then, wishing to show them the power of the devil, I introduced a trivial subject of conversation. Immediately, they woke up, full of joy. Then I said to them with many sighs, "Until now, we were discussing heavenly things and your eyes were heavy with sleep, but when I embarked on a useless discourse, you all woke up with alacrity. Therefore, brothers, I implore you to recognize the power of the evil demon; pay attention to yourselves, and guard yourselves from the desire to sleep when you are doing or listening to something spiritual."

* * *

He also said, "There was a monk living in a cave in the desert. His relations according to the flesh let him know, "Your father is very ill, at the point of death: come and receive his inheritance." He replied to them, "I died to the world before he did and the dead do not inherit from the living."