



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.**

**Our priest is Fr. Peter Irfan, Acting Rector.
You may reach him at 716-342-8520 (cell) or at fatherpeter777@yahoo.com.**

**Please join us for prayer and fellowship.
Divine Liturgies are held every Sunday at 10 am.
Great Vespers are held every Saturday evening at 5 pm.**

Next Services

Saturday, March 2nd

**Great Vespers
5:00 pm**

Fr. Peter is available to hear confessions before Vespers by appointment.

Sunday, March 3rd

**Matins
8:30 am**

**Divine Liturgy
10:00 am**

Fellowship to follow at

**St. Olympia Chapel
123 Main Street
Potsdam, NY, 13676**

**Also:
Daily Vespers at 5 pm
St. Olympia Hermitage
Edwards, NY**

*Visitors are welcome to attend.
E-mail mothersophronia@gmail.com to confirm and for directions. Fr. Peter will serve on Wednesday evenings and a light Lenten meal will follow.*

Exploring Christian Faith

St. Olympia Orthodox Church is hosting a series of events on selected Saturdays at 6 pm (following Vespers at 5 pm). Join us for pizza and a movie!

March 3rd, 6 pm - Where God Walked on Earth

The film explores St. Catherine's Monastery on Mt. Sinai in Egypt, one of the oldest monasteries in the world (6th century). It was built on the site of the Burning Bush and has some of the oldest extant icons on wood. It also contains the oldest continuously working library with many rare manuscripts.

The film highlights the prayer life of the monks as well as their daily existence in the harsh conditions of the desert. It also shows the cave dwelling of St. John Climacus and explains the monk's centuries-old symbiotic relationship with the Bedouin people.



1 Cor. 1:10-18

*Note: the following article was written by Fr. Philip Speranza, a.k.a. Fr. Guido, in 2018
It is included here by permission.*

Have you ever heard the word "cant"? Not "c-a-n-apostrophe-t" but "c-a-n-t" "Cant" refers to communication that's either highly specialized, what we might call "technical jargon," or wording that's pious-sounding, but hollow and insincere. Think of a politician who speaks for an hour and yet tells you nothing; that's "cant." And in that sense, "cant can't:" it can't actually communicate anything; it can't get the job done. The opposite of cant is candor: openness, clarity, and plain speaking which therefore always communicates well.

Well, our society is marred by a profound lack of clear communication, even in the Christian "churches" of our day. Too often we often find "churches" that have abandoned candor in favor of cant; they've chosen to marginalize, cloud over, or just plain bury the harder truths of God's Word with human words that actually say nothing concrete, while reserving candor for the fluff statements with which no one could ever disagree. Consider, for example, this ringing affirmation: "We stand firmly behind the conviction that women should be respected!" Who's gonna argue with that? But it says absolutely nothing about how women are to be respected. In some parts of the world, women are "respected" by being covered from head to toe and hidden away, forbidden to go to school or drive a car or speak their mind. And mark you: the devil couldn't be more pleased with all this empty bloviating, because he knows full well that souls are not saved by the confusion and misunderstanding of cant, but by the sure and certain truth and candor of the Gospel.

So let's look at 1 Corinthians 1:10-18 where, in verses 17-18, we find the clarity and precision that we need to find, as St. Paul insists that Christ has sent him "to preach the Gospel, not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of no effect. For the message of the Cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God." And that applies to us how?? Well, suppose you're on a plane at 35,000 feet; and you have to defuse a ticking bomb. Failure means death, and you only have a minute or so left on the timer. You're on the phone with an expert who's trying to talk you through the process. Who do you want on the other end? Do you want that woolly-minded soul who says, "I was just thinking—and this is just my opinion, take it for what it's worth—but I was just thinking that it might be advisable, at this particular point in time and given all of the circumstances as we have now come to know them if one were to..." Or do you want someone who says, "Unscrew the panel on the front of the bomb, then cut the blue wire"? On the other hand, if there's been a sudden death in the family, do you want the gentle guy who with great tenderness says, "Come, please, and sit down. Unfortunately I have some very difficult news that I have to share with you"? Or do you want the guy who blurts out, "Hey, guess what! Your Aunt Millie just died. Bummer, dude!?" Most of us know instinctively which situations in life call for which approach. The problem is that we live in a world where supposed "tact" has become more important than truth, especially in those critical spiritual areas where only the unvarnished truth gets the job done.

Now, the situation our Epistle addresses is that while shows God wants all of us to believe the same thing when it comes to basic truth and basic morals, and to teach to others that same doctrine on which we are all agreed, apparently that wasn't happening in Corinth. When it came to doctrine, the Corinthians were all teaching something different, but defending their lack of harmony with one another by claiming harmony with one of several different religious leaders of the day: Paul, Apollos, Cephas (Peter), even Christ Jesus Himself. But in verse 13, Paul cuts to the heart of the issue when he asks, "Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?" In effect, Paul was saying, "Let me get this straight. You're teaching false doctrine and justifying it on the basis of what you claim who said?" Paul knew very well that he, Apollos, and Peter all taught the same thing, and that their teaching found its source and full agreement in Jesus Christ. There could, therefore, be no division among them if the Corinthians were really following these men; so there had to be somebody else sticking their oar in.

We have exactly the same problems today. Everyone who says "I am a Christian" should all mean exactly the same thing: "I believe and teach everything—and only those things—that Christ and His Apostles taught." But that's not the reality, is it? People are teaching and believing, not according to the teachings of Christ and His Apostles, but according to what some other human being has taught; teaching and believing doctrines that have little or nothing whatsoever to do with what Jesus Himself taught, what the Scripture says, and/or what the Church, the Body of Christ, has always believed and taught consistently from day one to this present moment.

Let's be blunt: a person cannot rightly claim to be a follower of Jesus Christ and still believe that they can be saved by their own good works, not when Jesus Himself taught in John 3:16 that "whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Salvation through trusting and salvation through earning are opposites. Similarly, a person cannot rightly claim to be a follower of Jesus Christ and still believe that Christians essentially save themselves by their decision to accept Jesus, not when Jesus Himself said in John 1:13 that Christians "are born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." A person cannot rightly claim to be a follower of Jesus Christ and still believe that Holy Baptism is not really necessary and is nothing but an empty symbol, not when Jesus Himself said in John 3:5 that "unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God." A person cannot rightly claim to be a follower of Jesus Christ, and still believe that there's really no such thing as sin, not when Romans 3:23 insists that "all have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God;" not when Romans 6:23 tells the blunt truth that "the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." Masking departures from the Gospel of Christ with equal parts of confusion and rationalization may make a group seem "nice" or "open" or "accepting;" while doctrinal clarity is written off these days as "unloving" or "intolerant." But language used to downplay doctrine to render it insignificant is anything but loving, because false doctrine diminishes Jesus Christ and all that He said and did on our behalf; it makes something about Jesus and/or His saving work seem unimportant, unnecessary, less. If, for example, we're saved and put into right relationship with God just by "being a good person," then Christ's sacrifice of Himself upon the Cross was needless, indeed pointless; and it was no kind of proof of God's limitless love for us.

Ah, but the problem with clarity of doctrine is: the way it gores our own ox. Few folks here would disagree that prostitution and pornography are sin. But when doctrine touches us personally? I remember when one priest (not me!) had the gumption to correct a lady who wore to church a skirt shorter than short shorts. The ensuing explosion was quite something to behold, let me tell you! That person wanted to be "Orthodox," "right-believing," and enjoy the doctrinal and moral clarity of Orthodoxy, but not have that clarity applied her wardrobe. We want clarity, but our old nature wants a clarity that doesn't point out my sins and faults. But candor means that we articulate the difference between truth and error, between virtue and sin. Plain language means that we no longer call foul language "colorful," but "sin." It means we stand for the sanctity of human life from womb to tomb, and call both abortion and neglect of the needy "sin." It means we don't pretend that God has no problem with spending thousands of dollars on luxuries and entertainment while we dribble only a couple of bucks into caring of the poor and needy.

True clarity often tweaks our sinful pride. But clarity in connection with how much and how often we fail, how often and in how many ways we sin, also helps to lend clarity to the wonder of the Gospel. Only when we see our fallenness clearly can we lift our eyes to the cross and in utter amazement say to our God, "Let me get this straight. For Christ's sake You forgive me all of my sin, every single one? In Christ You love me even, though I sin so often and in so many ways? Despite all that, You love me still and want me to join You forever in your heaven?" The answer, of course, is a crystal clear "Yes! Your sin has been erased by my Son. I love you!" And that's the bottom line. If we know nothing else, and if we're confused about everything else, this is the one thing we need to keep straight: God, for Jesus' sake, has forgiven my sins. Once that faith is created in our hearts by the Holy Spirit, it brings with it a love for every will, and command of our God and a stubborn refusal to compromise even one word that our God has given to us.