



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 at 10 am
Great Vespers are held every Saturday evening at 5 pm
Services are primarily in English.**

Next Services

Saturday, July 7th

**Great Vespers
5:00 pm**

Sunday, July 8th

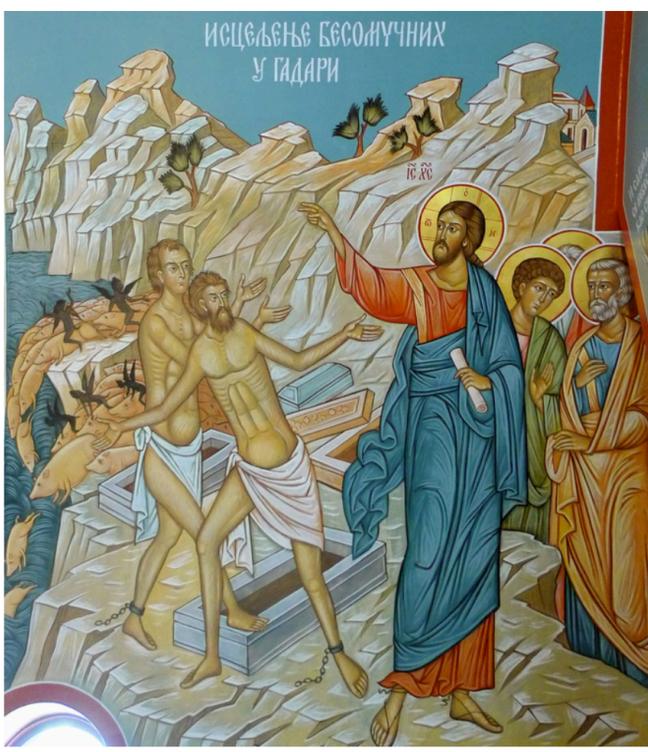
**Matins
9:00 am**

**Divine Liturgy
10:00 am**

at

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

All welcome!



Fifth Sunday after Pentecost

Gospel: Matthew 8:28-9:1

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

Today's Gospel, Matthew 8:28-9:1, is, in part, an object lesson in how not to deal with the brokenness in ourselves and in our world. One day Jesus came "to the country of the Gergesenes;" and "there met Him two demon-possessed men, coming out of the tombs, exceedingly fierce, so that no one could pass that way." These two were isolated, lived among "the tombs" in the local cemetery. But every time there was a funeral, it was touch-and-go whether these two would add to the body-count. In compassion, Jesus delivers the two from their demons, sending the demons into a nearby herd of pigs, which promptly stampede over the edge of a cliff into the lake and drown. How did the locals react? Not with gratitude for the liberation of their neighbors; instead "they begged [Jesus] to depart from their region." Why? The loss of the swine directly affected their pocketbook. The situation of the two demoniacs was an evil that was at a distance from them and really didn't intrude into their lives unless and until they had to bury somebody. Despite the fact that these two men had been friends, neighbors, maybe even kinfolk, it was "out of sight, out of mind."

Sound familiar? Don't we also really care only about suffering and evil that impacts us directly and personally? And don't we tend to assume that because we're children of God through Jesus Christ, God's supposed to exempt us from suffering ourselves and from having to deal with the sufferings of others? Don't we tend, when we do encounter evil, to try to get away from that situation as fast as we can? We have a relative or neighbor who's showing signs of starting to abuse prescription drugs---and we start to avoid them. A co-worker tells stories that make us think she might be being abused by her husband, and we steer our conversations to the weather. We know there's evil in the world. We just don't want to be confronted by it. We want God to keep us insulated and isolated.

But Jesus came to confront and conquer the evil in the world. And that makes us uncomfortable, because we know that if He did it, He expects us, His Body, to do it too. But truth be told, we'd rather choose what these townsfolk chose. Firstly, they chose what seemed to be "peace." The loss of the pigs troubled their wallets; but Jesus was disturbing the "peace" they had made with the evil in their midst; and they wanted their peace back.

Now, there is a peace that's a good thing. That peace, says Romans 5:1, includes having "peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." But this Gergesene peace was a peace that says, "I don't care if someone is hurting as long as I don't have to hear them crying." They were content that the two men be demon-possessed, as long as they didn't bother the town. But now here's Jesus upsetting everybody. And even though verse 33 explains how those herding the pigs "went away into the city and told everything, including what had happened to the demon-possessed men," apparently the townsfolk didn't even stop to think about, much less appreciate and be thankful for, the difference that Jesus had made in the lives of their two demon-possessed neighbors, They knew of this miracle, but chose to be bothered rather than blessed.

Secondly, these folks chose property over people. Our Gospel doesn't record anyone saying, "Hey, it's terrible about the pigs, but it's worth these two guys getting healed!" No; the financial loss mattered more to them than the gain of their two neighbors free and their cemetery safe again. But why did Jesus allow the demons to enter the pigs? He Himself doesn't say. But could it be He was demonstrating that pigs can be more sensible than people (because unlike we humans, who embrace evil and willingly take it into ourselves, as soon as the pigs felt the presence of evil within themselves they tried to stampede away from it); and that He may put us in situations where there's a cost to our obedience? It could be paying for school supplies for a struggling foster child, or donating sacrificially to the Mustard Seed or to the Youth Emergency Shelter Society, and the like. Indeed, Jesus might point us in directions that require a downward adjustment in our standard of living and ask us to give more than is comfortable. You and I tend to think, "Well, it's my money." Nope. It's God's money, only shared with us for a season. And He has the right, not just to ask us, but to tell us to make whatever sacrifices He deems necessary.

And let's be clear: "evil" is not an abstract concept, and not just intrinsically bad. Evil also destroys lives: people destroyed by addiction; children abused instead of cherished; marriages ripped apart and families torn asunder. Evil has real world consequences. For the two men in our Gospel, it was being reduced to a kind of insanity. Yet the people still chose their peace and property over seeing these two set free.

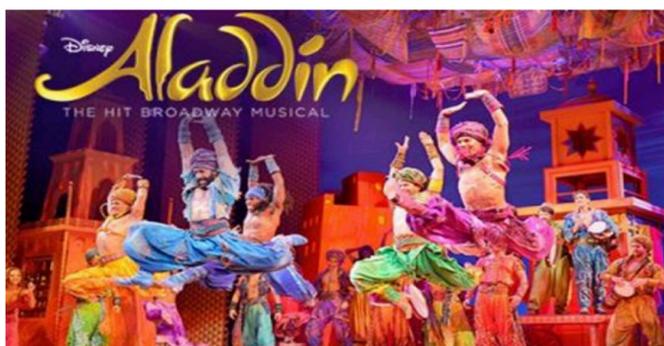
And what applies to life in the world applies to the life of the Church. Often, when parishes talk about "building the church," they mean raising attendance, increasing the budget, and generally improving what goes on within the church building. And certainly there's a place for that. But "building the church" also involves changing the world. As the Body of Christ, we're supposed to be the channels through which the risen Jesus continues the ministry He claimed as His own in Luke 4:18-18, "to proclaim good news to the poor; to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed; to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor" and have an impact beyond our building. Yet we're often tempted to define the Church's work as "spiritual," and define "spiritual" in a way that presumes no real-world changes. But "spiritual things" cannot be cleanly separated from everything else. One of our Lord's scathing criticisms of the Pharisees, says Matthew 23:23, was that they were scrupulous to "pay tithe of mint and anise and cumin," herbs from their kitchen gardens, but "neglected the weightier matters of the Law: justice and mercy and faith." The temptation to ignore the evil in the world that doesn't seem "spiritual" simply doesn't square with the Gospel.

And our usual excuses for our inaction just don't cut it. "Well, I'm only one person." True. But nobody's asking us to fix all the problems of the world all by our lonesome. Our task is to walk through life with eyes open to the pain around us and heart attuned to the voice of God telling us how to help: like being a shoulder to cry on for someone dealing with the effects of evil in their lives. Sometimes there are greater time and money sacrifices to be made, but they are still ones that one person can do. After all, the world is healed only one person, one soul, at a time.

Or we think, "I don't know what to do!" Well, James 1:5 tells us what to do: "If any of you lacks wisdom [God's truth for living], let him ask of God, Who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him." When it comes to evil, there are few easy answers; and the hardest thing is to face evil squarely even without any idea how to solve it. Our call is not to cut and run, but to look that problem in the face and live for a while with the uncertainty of not knowing what to do as we wait upon God to show us what to do. We have to be willing to let God lead step by step, maybe make some efforts that don't work great, take a couple steps back and then try again. And it all starts with prayer, with actually asking God to give us wisdom on how to proceed, realizing that sometimes it's just a matter of getting down in the mud and helping as best we can, just digging in and figuring it out as we go.

Ah, but sometimes the truth is "I'm scared!" Well, it's OK that evil scares us; even the pigs panicked. And in Matthew 10:28 our Lord says to "fear him [the devil] who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell." But God is always, always, always bigger than the evil. He again and again and again we need to hear the words of 1 John 4:4, "Greater is He that is in you than he that is in the world," and the words of 1 John 4:18, that "perfect love [meaning, God's perfect love] casts out all fear." We supply the willingness; God supplies everything else, including the courage.

Now, no one human has all the answers to all the problems we're facing as individuals and as a world; and no "one-size-fits-all" solution actually fits. Being "God's fellow workers" who, says Galatians 6:1, are called to "bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ," requires that we listen to God's leading and participate in God's power as He shows up. And the first step is simple: just don't run away. We need stay with it, face it in its ugliness, be burdened about it---not because it's inconveniencing us, but because it's wrong and someone needs to do something about it; then deal with it as God leads us to. Bottom line? Do you and I want God to help us to hide from the world or use us to change the world?



**For All Diocesan Youth and Friends...
from elementary to middle school, high school, and college!**

WHEN: Wednesday, August 22nd, 10:30 AM – 7 PM

WHERE: New Amsterdam Theatre, 214 W. 42nd St., New York, NY

COST: \$50 for Youth and \$75 for Adults

TRANSPORT: Christ the Saviour Church, 365 Paramus Rd., Paramus, NJ
Bus will pick up at the church at 11 AM and drop off at 7 PM.

DEADLINE: Tickets will be sold on a first come, first served basis

SCHEDULE FOR THE DAY

- 10:30 AM** Morning Prayer with the Archbishop, at Christ the Saviour Church (365 Board Road, Paramus, NJ)
- 11 AM** Board Bus at Christ the Saviour Church
- 12:30 PM** Arrive at the New Amsterdam Theatre
- 1 PM** Matinee Show of Aladdin the Musical
- 3:30 PM** Show Ends, Meet & Greet with the Cast, Group Photo
- 5 PM** Dinner
- 6 PM** Board Bus for Christ the Saviour Church
- 7 PM** Arrive at Christ the Saviour Church

CONTACT INFORMATION

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