



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

**Monday, August 6th
Feast of the
Transfiguration**

**Divine Liturgy
10:00 am**

**Saturday, August 11th
Great Vespers
5:00 pm**

**Sunday, August 12th
Matins
9:30 am
(Summer hours)**

**Divine Liturgy
10:00 am**

at

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

Parish Pilgrimage

Our Parish will make a Pilgrimage to the Dormition of the Virgin Mary Greek Orthodox Church in Ottawa, to celebrate Great Vespers for the feast day of their parish on Tuesday, August 14th. Carpools will leave at 1:30 pm. Their Greek Festival will be in full swing following the service! Friends and family welcome.

Phone Cindy Eyler at (315) 771-7579 or e-mail ceyler@twcny.rr.com to join the carpool group. You must have appropriate ID to cross into Canada.

Also, Divine Liturgy for the feast will be celebrated at St. Olympia Chapel on Wednesday, August 15th at 10 am.



Fr. Peter blesses emergency vehicles in Potsdam with the help of Subdeacon Julio Gurrea
Photo by Trudell Photographics. Used by permission

Some Thoughts on Why We Bless Vehicles

by Subdeacon Julio Gurrea

Earlier today our parish gathered to ask for God's mercy, grace and protection on roads that can often be chaotic and violent. We prayed for God to guard us with His angels. We prayed for the safety for our children and our beloved. And prayer, as I was reminded once by a wise priest, is always "a trust in a love that is divine." But we did more than pray, we blessed vehicles. In our modern world, the concept of blessing a material object may seem a bit strange. What does "blessing" something even mean? How can the grace of God, which is immaterial, be contained in some material object?

It is our belief as Orthodox Christians that the original, ideal role of humankind is to be the priest of creation. The human being is both material and spiritual in one united whole that can serve as a bridge between the material created order and the spiritual created order. We exist as a unity of both flesh and spirit, and our main role is to take the created world - the matter and "stuff" that it is literally made of - and offer it back up to God who created it so that He can make it holy. We set it apart and offer it to Him in a spirit of thanksgiving and praise so that He can sanctify it. This is our purpose. But what is holiness? The word "holy" ("aghios" in Greek) means "apartness, set-apartness, separateness."

We can choose to be in opposition to God by misusing His creation, or we can choose to be partners with God by "setting apart" His creation and offering it back up to Him. When we do so, we (mankind) are then acting in our intended role as the priest of creation.

The "setting apart" of a material object like fruit, a car, a building, or a basin of water through the act of blessing it does not make it different than what it already essentially is. It restores it to the ideal, perfected condition that it was in the beginning. It is a return to its fully realized, fully beautiful, fully accomplished state. So, for example, when the Church blesses water and then declares that it is Holy Water, it isn't water PLUS something else (as if some kind of magical power was "mixed" into the water). That would be a very simplistic, primitive and superstitious understanding of what blessing and sanctity really mean. Instead, Holy Water is what water was always intended to be--it is water more perfectly and more fully showing itself forth as the "very good" thing that God created it to be when He made the heavens and the earth and all that is in it and declared it all to be "very good."

Tomorrow, the 6th of August, is when the Orthodox Church marks the Feast of the Transfiguration. This commemorates an event that is recorded in the Gospels where Jesus Christ took three of His Apostles to the summit of Mount Tabor and began to radiate with brilliant light. He was not becoming anything else other than what He eternally is. He was simply being revealed as the true light of the world, a reality we all can plainly see if we have the eyes to see it. May this same Christ, the Only-Begotten Son of the Living God, who blesses and sanctifies all things, bless us and protect us as we travel on the roads of Saint Lawrence County, New York.

Tenth Sunday after Pentecost

Epistle: 1 Corinthians 4:9-16

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

The Church at Corinth was a parish fractured by divisions over personalities, over moral issues, over unchecked egos. St. Paul's first and second letters to the Corinthians are, at one level, a recipe for reuniting that divided church. And today's Epistle, 1 Corinthians 4:9-16, and a few following verses we'll also look at, deals with part of what helps a parish maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace: good and godly pastoral leadership which fulfills the pastoral task as Paul defines it in Ephesians 4:12, "equipping the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying [the building-up] of the body of Christ."

Now the word "pastor" means "shepherd." Back in verse 1, St. Paul rightly had called pastors "servants of Christ," because it's He, the Good Shepherd, Who is the model and template for the under-shepherds of what is, after all, His flock. Not surprisingly, then, the first thing St. Paul sets forth as the proper spirit for proper pastoral leadership is that good pastoral leadership remains faithful despite suffering, in imitation of the Christ Who "became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." Not, mark you, that it's the parish's role to inflict that suffering! But struggle and suffering are always part of pastoral leadership. In Paul's case, he says in verses 11-13, "we both hunger and thirst, and we are poorly clothed, and beaten, and homeless...We have been made as the filth of the world, the off-scouring of all things until now [we're still treated like garbage]." Now, it's not likely these days in North America (not yet, anyway) that a parish priest will endure that kind of suffering. But there are still struggles. A married priest is all too often caught in conflict between the needs and expectations of his parish on the one hand, and the needs and expectations of his wife and family on the other. Difficult situations and conflicts can arise in a parish and spread like wildfire. Quarreling parishioners both demand that Father take their side. Financial problems in the parish can make a paycheck uncertain. Sometimes it's not great problems or wicked persecutions that cause the pastoral suffering; it's being nibbled to death by ducks that can drive a priest off the deep end into discouragement and despair. But no matter what the problems, struggles, or sufferings, does he continue to serve God and his people with all his heart, and without any sense of entitlement or being hard-done-by?

Secondly, we see that good pastoral leadership warns but does not shame. In verse 14 Paul says "I do not write these things to shame you, but as my beloved children I warn you." Up to this point, Paul has been pretty strong in his words to the Corinthian church. Some of these folks had sinful attitudes leading to sinful behavior, and Paul called them on it, with no pussy-footing around. But this is the same Paul who, in Ephesians 6:4, urges, "fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath; don't be so hard and harsh with them that you just make them angry and bitter." There's a huge difference between being clear, firm, decisive, even stern, in giving direction and/or correction, and being nasty and abusive. A loving father cares enough to warn his children of the consequences if they continue to do wrong. And no genuine father to a parish would ever fail to warn his children of the consequences of misbehavior; and no wise pastor or parish would ever reject or attempt to silence the warning of a loving and caring father. But using shame and/or humiliation as a tool for correction? Making people feel stupid or foolish? Nope. Not part of the package of "do unto others as you would have them do unto you."

Thirdly, good pastoral leadership shows a fatherly spirit, not just an instructor's spirit. Now, in those days, wealthy families provided a "guardian" or "instructor" or "tutor" for their sons. The instructor was a trusted slave who not only tutored in classroom subjects but was placed in complete charge of a child's welfare and growth. Part of his task was even to escort the child to school and see to it that no harm come to him. And the instructor or tutor was responsible for the growth and development of that child until that kid was legally an adult. So, in verse 15 Paul says that "though you might have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet you do not have many fathers; for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the Gospel." The Corinthian church had lots of capable instructors and teachers, but Paul alone loved them with a father's love. He was the one "begot" them, who by his preaching and caring brought them to faith in Christ; and he had more concern, more tenderness, and more caring for them than anyone else. Teachers, instructors, are important for growing and discipling believers; but a parish priest is called upon to serve with the spirit of a wise father, a spirit that shows love, care, interest, giving, acceptance and praise.

Fourthly, good pastoral leadership sets a positive example. In verse 16 Paul says, "Therefore I urge you, imitate me." Does that sound like pride and arrogance: "Hey, look at me! Aren't I wonderful?" But isn't it true that every good father tries his very best to live the kind of life that his children could and would gladly follow in his steps? Well, St. Paul certainly lived a life of commitment and self-denial for the sake of the Lord Jesus Christ. He had given all he had and all he was to Christ. So he can legitimately say, "Follow me. Follow my example. Imitate me. Commit your life to Christ the way I've committed my life to Christ." Not that proper pastoral leadership is or ever could be perfect and sinless. Sometimes the best example a priest can give is an example of what honest repentance looks like, and how to swallow one's pride and apologize. In a world and culture where it's always somebody else's fault, that repentance and apology, too, are a good and needed example

Now going beyond our reading in to verse 17, we learn that good pastoral leadership provides for the growth of the people. Paul says, "For this reason I have sent Timothy to you, who is my beloved and faithful son in the Lord, who will remind you of my ways in Christ, as I teach everywhere in every church." The Corinthian church was a mess, and straightening out that mess was Paul's job--but not his only job. He was also responsible for making another missionary journey. Like the rest of us, he couldn't be in two places at once. But unlike many of us, he didn't throw up his hands and quit or fulfill one responsibility while neglecting the other. Instead, he sat down, wrote this letter dealing with their divisions, and sent one of his ablest assistants, Timothy, to stay there and shepherd that unruly flock until the mess was straightened out. And note that Timothy was Paul's "beloved and faithful son in the Lord," a young man who had earned Paul's trust and affection precisely by being faithful in prayer, faithful in the Word, faithful in witness, faithful in serving. Paul couldn't be there, but he did all he could to provide the best for that parish, so they could grow.

Lastly, as we read in verses 18-21, good pastoral leadership wants to be with the people. Remember: the Corinthian church was divided into four cliques that were at each other's throats. Anyone less committed wouldn't have run away from that craziness, especially if, like Paul himself, were under the Mitten in verse 18 Paul refers to "some" who "are puffed up, as though I were not coming to you," he's talking about folks who were criticizing him behind his back, undercutting his ministry and authority, and assuming that he'd never dare to face them. But Paul longed to be with those people and even brave their nastiness in order to help them through this troublesome time. He says, "I will come to you shortly, if the Lord wills." He's first and foremost the Lord's servant; so he goes where the Lord leads. But in his prayers Paul is pleading with God to send him back to those crazy Corinthians to help them.

Yes, Paul fully expects to deal with the troublemakers: "I will come to you shortly, if the Lord wills, and I will know, not the word of those who are puffed up, but their power. For the kingdom of God is not in word but in power." False charges were being made against him; but Paul's not interested in the accusations but in the power of his accusers to bring it up with evidence, not of his actions but of their lives. You see, the evidence of the Kingdom of God, of the rule and reign of God within a person's life, isn't just their say-so, but because the quality of that person's life reflects the grace and the love of God in Jesus Christ. The quality of their life determines the truth of their claims.

But even here, Paul refuses to turn his back on these people. He loved the people God committed to his care and longed to serve the Lord by serving the Lord's people. No matter what they were experiencing, or how much of a pain in the posterior they became, he refused to run from problems, but just lengthened his prayers. As Paul had already written in 1 Corinthians 4:1-2, "Let a man so consider us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover, it is required in stewards that one be found faithful." not necessarily successful, as the world measures success, but faithful in love and in service. That is good pastoral leadership.