



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, September 22nd
Great Vespers
5:00 pm**

Fr. Peter is available to hear confessions before Vespers. If this time does not work for you, please make arrangements with Fr. Peter for a more convenient time.

Sunday, September 23rd

**Matins
8:45 am**

**Divine Liturgy
10:00 am**

**followed by baptism of
baby Alexander**

Fellowship to follow

at

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



A warm welcome to Caleb (a SUNY Canton student), Svetlana (St. Lawrence University) and Rita (a North Country resident). They are shown with Fr. Peter and the decorated festal cross and floral arrangement courtesy of Mother Sophronia and Mary-Ann Cateforis.

Annual Parish Meeting

Our Annual Parish Meeting will take place on Sunday, October 14th after the Divine Liturgy. Fr. Peter will give a short presentation on his spiritual journey.

Note: the following article has been written by an anonymous contributor. He is in the process of leaving his present pastoral assignment so this will be his last sermon for a while (we hope not too long a break!).

It is included here by permission.

A Farewell Sermon

In Ecclesiastes 7:8 the preacher, traditionally understood to be King Solomon, says that “the end of a thing is better than its beginning.” Why? Beginnings always involve peering into an unknown future, and experiencing uncertainty, challenges, adjustments of one personality to someone else’s personality; so oftentimes beginnings are filled with misunderstandings, miscommunications; with people not able to figure out what the other person means, where they’re coming from, and why they get so bent out of shape over something seemingly small and insignificant. That’s why honeymoons don’t last. Reality sets in and the hard work of learning, not just how to love each other but also how to know and live with each other in patience, tolerance and non-violence, begins.

Endings are something else. The unknown has become known; most of the major surprises aren’t surprising anymore; adjustments have been made; and we’ve learned, if not to accept, then at least to cope with what in the other irritates the daylight out of us; we’ve come to a reasonably peaceful coexistence; and now we’re peering backward into our own history, seeking to understand it, make sense of it, assign meaning and value to it, get it into perspective.

But when it comes pastoral relationships, there’s really no ending at all, because life in Christ as His Body continues; the centrality of Christ and His Gospel continues; the preaching of the Gospel continues. The voice doing the preaching may be different, but the Gospel itself doesn’t change. The priest serving the Liturgy may be tall and slim instead of short and...um...well-rounded, but the Liturgy is still the one perfect sacrifice of Calvary and the reality of the empty tomb made present here and now in our time and space. The ending of one pastoral relationship and the beginning of another is really an exercise in continuity, because, says Hebrews 13:8, the Christ Who is at the heart and center of all ministry and all life, “is the same yesterday, today, and forever.”

Still, if endings involve getting things into perspective, let’s focus today on one Scripture which sums up what I hope and pray my pastorate has been about. In Philippians 3:7-11, St. Paul, reflecting back on his life before Christ, and on how he’d been a big deal among the Jewish religious elite, evaluates it this way: “But all such assets I have written off because of Christ. More than that, I count everything sheer loss, far outweighed by the gain of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for Whose sake I did in fact forfeit everything. I count it so much rubbish, for the sake of gaining Christ and finding myself in union with Him, with no righteousness of my own based on the law, but the righteousness which comes from faith in Christ given by God in response to faith. My one desire is to know Christ and the power of His resurrection, and to share His sufferings in growing conformity with His death, in hope of somehow attaining the resurrection from the dead.”

Note the central point here. What is “religion” really all about? It’s not about the self-made righteousness of “being a good person” and/or observing rituals and/or keeping rules. St. Paul says the heart and center of it all is “knowing Christ Jesus my Lord.” And he means “knowing Christ Jesus,” not in the sense of just knowing about Him, but actually knowing Him, being in personal relationship with Him. True religion is not about self-made righteousness, rituals or rules, but about relationship. Remember what our Lord defines as “the first and great commandment:” loving God with all our heart, mind, soul, and strength; “And the second is like it, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’” Relationship with God, and relationship with others: forming, repairing, nurturing, strengthening, and living those relationships is what everything in the life of the Church is supposed to be all about.

For Paul, right relationship with God had been his central goal all his life. And he’d given himself to finding that relationship by strict adherence to the Law of Moses; he tried to win God’s favor by exacting obedience to all the rules and rituals, down to the smallest detail. But none of that achieved the goal. When Paul says “I count it so much rubbish,” explains Bible commentator William Barclay, he means “I found the Law and all its ways of no more use than the refuse thrown on the garbage heap to help me get into right relationship with God. So I gave up trying to build up a goodness of my own; I gave up trying to achieve this relationship; and I came to God in humble faith, as Jesus told me to do, and I found that fellowship I had sought so long and had never found.” Right relationship with God is the foundation of right relationship with others. And right relationship with God is not based on keeping laws, rules and rituals, but by faith in Jesus Christ, by taking Him at His word; right relationship with God is not something we can ever achieve by our works and efforts, but only receive as the gift of God; right relationship with God is not won by our works but accepted by our will in choosing to trust God. That is the meaning of the “grace” and the “faith” by which alone God grants us salvation.

But relationships, if they’re real, have to be lived in the everyday, which is why in Philippians 2:12 Paul urges us to “work out [our] salvation in fear and trembling.” And in verse 10 of our Epistle St. Paul says that living our relationship with Christ in the everyday involves three things: knowing Him; knowing the power of His Resurrection; and knowing the fellowship of His sufferings. And again, that first, “that I may know Him,” means exactly what it says: not just knowing about Him, but knowing Him, just as we know any other person. In every page and paragraph of the Gospels Jesus shows us Who He is, what He’s like, how He thinks, what He wants and doesn’t want, what He likes and doesn’t like, what His hopes and dreams and longings are. In reading and reflecting on the Holy Gospels we get know to Jesus better than we may know spouse or children. We get to know Him more by interacting with Him in prayer and daily companionship with the One Who promises “Lo, I am with you always, even to the close of the age” and “I will never leave you, nor will I ever forsake you.” It’s never that we have to seek Him out; He’s always there, just waiting to be noticed. It is by encountering the risen Jesus in His Word, His Sacraments, and His daily presence with us that we come to know Him for the person He is.

Then too, living our relationship with Christ involves knowing “the power of His Resurrection.” The Resurrection is not just something that happened to/for Jesus alone, however important it was for Him. It is an event which unleashed into this world and into the life of every believer a living and dynamic power. Because Christ is risen, this life of ours and this human body of ours actually count; contrary to what a lot of folks seem to think these days, neither we as whole human beings nor our bodies in particular are just throw-aways, but sacred to God. It was in the body that Christ arose; it was in the body that Christ ascended; and it is the body which Christ sanctifies. 1 Corinthians 6:15 asks, “Do you not know that your bodies are members of [attached to, made one with] Christ?” It’s the bodily Resurrection of Christ which shows how important our human body and this present life actually are. Further, the bodily Resurrection of Christ is the guarantee of and template for our own resurrection, as we hear in 1 Corinthians 15:22, “For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive.” Because He lives, we shall live also. And because He lives not only risen but also victorious over the very worst that sin, death, and hell could do to anybody, and we are united to Him in Holy Baptism, His victory is our victory too. Knowing the power of His Resurrection means experiencing the reality that no matter how bad it gets, nothing can inflict upon us ultimate defeat, because He has already won the battle. And the bodily Resurrection of Christ is what guarantees that if life, in death, and in life beyond death the risen Jesus is always with us; it’s the proof of Romans 8:39, that nothing in all creation “shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Living our relationship with Christ also involves knowing “the fellowship of His sufferings.” So often we see any and all suffering as pointless, useless, worthless. But the suffering of Christ in His Passion and death wasn’t worthless, was it? It was redemptive; it was liberating; it was life-giving. So what we need to learn through our relationship with Jesus is that our suffering united to His and surrendered to His purpose and will can redemptively change our lives and the lives of those around us. To suffer in faith and especially for the faith is not a penalty; it’s the privilege of sharing in the very work of Christ. Living our relationship with Christ means being so united with Him that day by day we come more and more to share in His death, so that at the last we share in His ultimate Resurrection victory. To know Christ is to walk with Him the way He walked; to share the Cross He bore; to share the death He died; and finally to share the life He lives forevermore.

Save the dates...

Vladyka Michael will visit our parish on the weekend of Nov. 17th - 18th

...plan ahead!