

Next Services

**Saturday
December 16th**

Great Vespers at 5:00 pm

**Sunday
December 17th**

Divine Liturgy at 10:00 am

both at

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

All welcome!

Christmas Service Schedule:

**Saturday
December 23rd**

Great Vespers at 5:00 pm

**Sunday
December 24th**

Divine Liturgy at 10:00 am

and

**Great Vespers of the Nativity
at 5:00 pm**

**Monday
December 25th**

Divine Liturgy at 10:00 am



Vladyka Michael offers brief commentaries on various Orthodox topics in question and answer format on such topics as the Nativity, marriage, angels...

Go to https://www.nynjoca.org/lessons_in_our_faith.html

Reminder: you must copy the address to your web browser. Our bulletin does not contain live links.



Sayings of the Desert Fathers

Abba Nilus said, "Everything you do in revenge against a brother who has harmed you will come back to your mind at the time of prayer."

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He also said, "Prayer is the seed of gentleness and the absence of anger."

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He also said, "Prayer is a remedy against grief and depressions."

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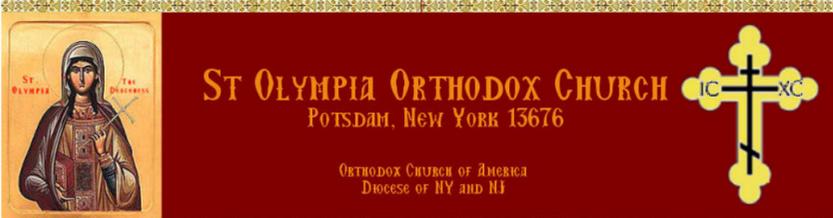
He also said, "If you want to pray properly, do not let yourself be upset or you will run in vain."

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He also said, "Go, sell all that belongs to you and give it to the poor and taking up the cross, deny yourself; in this way you will be able to pray without distraction."

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A brother questioned an old man saying, "What good work should I do so that I may live?" The old man said, "God knows what is good. I have heard it said that one of the Fathers asked Abba Nisterus the Great, the friend of Abba Anthony, and said to him, 'What good work is there that I could do?' He said to him, 'Are not all actions equal? Scripture says that Abraham was hospitable and God was with him. David was humble, and God was with him. Elias loved interior peace and God was with him. So, do whatever you see your soul desires according to God and guard your heart."



**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.**

Saint Barbara: The Believer and Authority

Note: the following article has been written by an anonymous contributor.

It is included here by permission.

Today, December 4th on the Julian Calendar, we celebrate the feast of the holy great-martyr Barbara. We have few solid historical facts about the details of her life. She lived sometime in the late 200s or very early 300s, possibly during the time of the persecution of Christians by the Roman emperor Diocletian. By all surviving accounts she was a young woman, still in her teens, and of great beauty. Naturally, all the local boys were trying to win her hand in marriage. That annoyed her father, Dioscurus, to the point where he shut Barbara up in a tower to discourage the attentions of her numerous suitors. Somehow, and we don't know how, Barbara came to faith in Jesus Christ; and that so enraged her pagan father that he tried kill her. But by divine protection she was miraculously transported out of his reach. Still seething with rage, Dioscurus did the unthinkable: he denounced his own daughter to the pagan Roman authorities, who arrested her for being a Christian and tortured her to try to force her to renounce Christ. When Barbara refused to renounce her faith, she was condemned to death; and her father, ordered to do the deed with his own hands, gladly complied. According to one legend, as soon as he had murdered his daughter, Dioscurus was struck by lightning and reduced to ashes...which is why her intercession is still invoked against danger from lightning!

Barbara's story is certainly one of courage and faithfulness and taking up her cross to follow Christ, and doing so, not as an adult, but as a teen-ager. And let's face it: when you and I are faced with the story of this or any other of the martyrs, we cannot but stand shame-faced as we contrast their courage and faithfulness in the face of indescribably painful suffering and death to our reluctance and sometimes downright whininess about suffering even minor inconvenience for the sake of Christ. Too often you and I spend more time looking for loopholes and trying to rationalize our way out of the clear condition for discipleship that Christ Jesus Himself lays down in Luke 9:23 than we do in seeking to embrace it cheerfully and wholeheartedly: "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me." And especially now, in this season of the Nativity Fast, this time of repentance, we would do well to face up to and repent of this and all the ways in which you and I don't want to and sometimes flat-out refuse to just grow up in Christ.

But there's something else the story of St. Barbara raises for us: the question of the believer's relationship to authority. One inescapable fact of human life and of Christian life is the existence of authority. In Exodus 20:12 God Himself commands "Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long upon the land which the LORD your God is giving you;" and clearly that establishes authority in the family and in the school: the authority of parents and of those acting in the place of place of parents over children. And in Deuteronomy 21:18-21 we see just how strong that authority was in the Law of Moses. "If a man has a stubborn and rebellious son who will not obey the voice of his father or the voice of his mother, and who, when they have chastened him, will not heed them, then his father and his father and his mother shall take hold of him and bring him out to the elders of his city, to the gate of the city. And they shall say to the elders of his city, 'This son of ours is stubborn and rebellious; he will not obey our voice; he is a glutton and a drunkard.' Then all the men of his city shall stone him to death; so you shall put away the evil from among you, and all Israel shall hear and fear." Under the New Covenant, that authority in the home still exists, but in a more balanced way. Ephesians 6:1-4 tells us, "Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. 'Honor your father and your mother,' which is the first commandment with promise: 'that it may be will with you and you may live long on the earth.' And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord."

Flowing from authority in the family, Scripture also teaches that there's authority in society, the larger human family. Romans 13:1-2 is uncompromising in its insistence, "Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God. Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment upon themselves." St. Paul goes on to say that the Christian citizen must "render therefore to all their due: taxes to whom taxes are due, customs to whom customs, fear to whom fear, honor to whom honor." And mark you: he does not attach any caveat here; he does not say "obey if the government is Christian or at least Christian-friendly" or "obey if the government provides good government" or "obey if the government happens to be the political party for which you voted." Remember: St. Paul is writing these words about the pagan Roman government which ultimately would cut off his head.

Also flowing from authority in the family, Scripture teaches that there's authority in the Church, the family of God. Hebrews 13:17 tells all believers, "Obey those who ruler over you [lead you], and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account. Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you." Now understand: that's not the call to blind or mindless obedience that some leaders make it out to be. Both in Greek and in Latin, the word we translate here as "obey" means "be open to being persuaded; give ear to, listen to, follow a person's advice;" it's the opposite of being a know-it-all. The Greek word here translated as "submit" means "be open and cooperative;" it's a word-picture of someone who's not stubborn as the proverbial mule, insistent only on his own way, but who, precisely because he is teachable, accepts the wisdom of what he's taught, cooperates with it, and lives it. This is not the obedience and submission of a child to a parent's "Because I said so!" It's the openness, honesty, humility and cooperativeness of the responsible adult with leaders who "watch out for your souls," who care so much that they may even literally lose sleep over the spiritual welfare of those they lead.

But neither in the home nor in society nor even in the Church is the authority invested in any human absolute, because supreme over all is the authority of God. Remember how, in Matthew 22:15-21, the Lord Jesus makes that point very clearly. When the Pharisees were trying to trick Jesus into committing treason, they asked Him "Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar or not?" But Jesus was onto their game, demanded that they show Him the Roman coin used to pay taxes, and asked "Whose image and inscription is this?" Not getting His point, they answered "Caesar's." Then Jesus sprang His own trap: "Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's." Get it? There is a line between the authority God delegates and entrusts to human leaders and the authority God reserves to Himself. And every time "Caesar," whether that be parent or boss at work or government or Church leader, steps over the line to try either to take what is God's or even to become god, the Christian must refuse to obey and refuse to submit. It can be something big, like apostasy, or something seemingly small, like a boss telling a worker to "cut corners" and not give a customer all that they're paying for. But in every case the believer must neither obey nor submit.

We find one scriptural example of that in Acts 5:29. Once again, the Jewish high priest and the Sanhedrin had arrested the apostles in Jerusalem and thrown them in jail. During the night "an angel of the Lord opened the prison doors and brought [the apostles] out," and told them to "Go, stand in the temple and speak to the people all the words of this life." Now you'd think that when the authorities discovered all this, they'd give their heads a shake and re-think their position and opposition. Nope. They sent the temple guards to arrest the apostles again and bring them before the council, where they again told the apostles to stop preaching about Jesus. "But Peter and the other apostles answered and said: 'We ought to obey God rather than men.'" Human leaders can be wrong, mistaken and/or just power-hungry, and over-reach. To that, faithful Christian's answer must always be "We ought to obey God rather than men."

That's what St. Barbara did. She put her faithfulness and obedience to God exactly where it belongs: in first place in her life, no matter what. She refused to obey her father, and she refused to obey her government, because both were commanding what they had no right to command: that she turn away from God and the Gospel. And yes, that obedience to the authority of God did cost her dearly. She, like the apostles and martyrs before her, paid the same price the Lord Jesus Himself paid in obeying the Father's will: "He humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross." She followed exactly the example of her Lord. Are we?