



## 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  
and are preceded by Great Vespers every Saturday evening.**

**Services are primarily in English.**

### Next Services

**Saturday  
May 19th**

**Great Vespers  
at 5:00 pm**

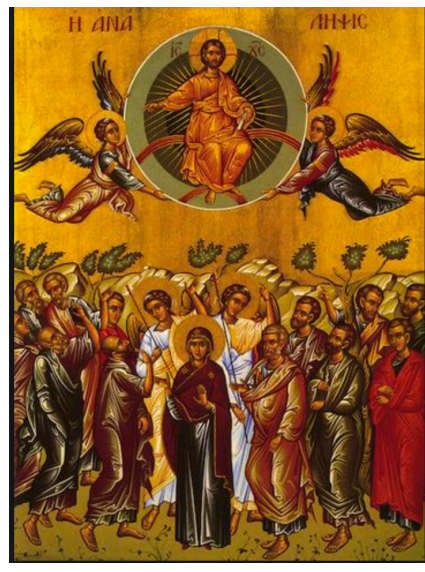
**Sunday  
May 20th**

**Sunday of the  
First Ecumenical  
Council**

**Divine Liturgy  
at 10:00 am**

at

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



## CHRIST IS RISEN!

### The Ascension

(Acts 1:1-2, Luke 24:36-53)

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

*It is included here by permission.*

In both the East and the West there is a hymn of praise which takes its opening words from the song of the angels in Luke 2:14, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men." This hymn, which we call "The Great Doxology," we either read or sing at Matins; and it is, obviously, a glorification of God: a contemplation, a proclamation and a celebration of God's greatness and wonder. And so it should be. As much as we, in our fallen state, are selfish and self-centered and focused on self and our own glory, there's within us a memory of Eden that longs for, hungers for, even a glimpse of that greatness and majesty beyond ourselves; deep down within each of us is Moses in Exodus 33:18, crying out to God, "Please show me Your glory." And we want to do more than see that glory; in Psalm 86:12 King David articulates the desire of your heart and mine when he says, "I will praise You, O Lord my God, with all my heart, and I will glorify Your name forevermore." Whether we consciously realize it or not, we are all creatures wanting to celebrate our Creator, children proud of and wanting to brag on our Father.

But how often do you and I reflect upon, appreciate, and give humble and heartfelt thanks for the way God glorifies us? He does, you know. How? Firstly, God glorifies us in our creation. You and I only too easily forget or gloss over unthinkingly just Who it was in Genesis 1:26 Who said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness." It was no one other and no one less than the one true and living Lord God Almighty Who freely and in sovereign wise chose to create us at all, and Who freely and sovereignly and lovingly chose to share with us elements of His own life and nature and chose to shape us in such a way that we could live out His life within us His way. Yes, in comparison to the vastness and complexity of all creation, to the millions of years that stars and planets live, sometimes we wonder: what are we, who sprout up like grass in the morning, only to wither away by nightfall? We can feel so tiny, so insignificant. Yet what other creature of earth share with us the privilege of being made in God's own image and being called to live according to God's own likeness? None! It's as Psalm 8:3-5 says so joyously, "When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, the moon and the stars, which You have ordained, what is man that you are mindful of him, and the son of man that You visit [or, care for] him? For You have made him a little lower than the angels, and You have crowned him with glory and honor."

And that does not just mean humanity in general. It applies to each and every one of us individually. What David says of himself in Psalm 139:14 he says on behalf of each of us: no matter how insignificant we may think we or how insignificant others may say we are, the truth remains that "I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made." God has glorified each and every human being by designing us as wonderfully complex creatures of body, mind and emotion, and spirit. Of course, we're so used to being ourselves, living as embodied creatures, that we take our complexity for granted. We forget, for example, that when we look at a tree or the stars or the face of a loved one, our eye takes in the image upside-down, and that the brain flips it right-side-up in our perception. We take for granted the subtle interplay between body and emotion, such that we can communicate a complex message with but a look, whether it be "I love with all my heart" or "Just wait till your father gets home!" And we take for granted that we have an immortal soul, sharing in God's own ability to think, to choose, to love. But whether we appreciate it or not, we are indeed "fearfully and wonderfully made."

But it doesn't stop there because, secondly, God glorifies us in our redemption. We too often think of our redemption, our salvation, only in terms of the forgiveness of our sins. Now, certainly that's a core part of the Gospel message; in Luke 24:47 the risen Jesus tells His disciples their responsibility: "that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations." And it is indeed a glorious thing that the all-pure, all-holy sovereign King of kings and Lord of lords should deign to pardon our wickedness, our evil, our rebellion against Him.

But that's not all that the Father does for us in Christ, is it? Ephesians 2:1-5 says that we were, not just guilty, not just condemned to an eternity apart from God, but spiritually "dead in trespasses and sins;" yet "God, Who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ." God takes the dead and corrupted corpse of our soul and glorifies it by raising it up, not just to life again, but to new life, a new kind of life, to "eternal life," to a share in God's own kind of life. It should absolutely blow our minds to hear 2 Peter 1:4 telling us that in and through Jesus Christ God gives to us "exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these [we] may be partakers of the divine nature;" that in and through the new life of grace God transforms us to become by grace what Christ is by nature. And in so doing, says Romans 5:8, God dignifies us by giving us something to which, just as creatures, not to mention condemned sinners, we have absolutely no right whatsoever: the demonstration, the proof, of "His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us."

And still God is not done. Psalm 100:3 celebrates that "it is [God] Who has made us, and not we ourselves; we are His people and the sheep of His pasture." And surely it is dignity enough for us, glory enough for us, to be one of God's own people, one of those for whom God cares with the concern of a truly Good Shepherd. But it's not dignity and glory enough for God! God is not content for us to be just His sheep, His creatures, and/or just His subjects; He wants more for us. We know now by heart John 3:16, how "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life." But do we grasp what John 1:12 tells us, that "as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God"? Do we grasp the wonder and the glory of the fact, says Romans 8:15-16, that in and through Holy Baptism you and I "did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but [we] received the Spirit of adoption by Whom we cry out, 'Abba, Father.' The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God"? You and I are no longer just human creatures; God has glorified each of us and all of us, says Romans 9:26, by making us through our baptismal union with Christ, "sons and daughters of the living God." Who's your daddy? The Lord God Almighty: He's your Daddy.

Lastly, God glorifies us in Christ's ascension. In John 17:4-5, before His Passion and death, Jesus prays, "I have glorified You on the earth. I have finished the work which You have given Me to do. And now, O Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was." From all eternity there was God the Word, Who in time and space became incarnate as Jesus Christ. Before He came to earth, He existed in the form of God, with all the glory of God. When Jesus was clothed in human flesh, He laid aside the glory of heaven and, says Philippians 2:7, "emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and coming in the likeness of men." But now, risen in glory, in His Ascension He re-takes His rightful glory.

BUT Jesus does not become again the bodiless Word He had been from all eternity. In His ascension He did not discard His flesh, His human nature, but carried it with Him to sit, as the Symbol of Faith [the Nicene Creed] says, "at the right hand of the Father." By reason of His Incarnation and more forcefully by reason of His Resurrection, He is now and forever the God-Man; it's not just the pre-eternal Word but also a fully human Being Who is robed in glory and majesty....and not just for Himself! Romans 8:29 says plainly that Jesus is "the firstborn among many brethren;" He's the template of what God intends for each of us who are in Christ. Get it? Because we form one Body with Him, we are already raised up in glory and seated at the Father's right hand, just as Ephesians 2:5-6 explains: the Father "made us alive together with Christ...and raised us up together and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus."

And that should not only comfort us, but also challenge us to defend that humanity which in Christ God so glorifies. Our society is reverting to a savagery which discounts the value of human life. It's not just school shootings, the butchery of abortion and/or killing off the inconvenient under the guise of "compassion;" it's also the way we tolerate business and industry treating human beings as so many spare parts, interchangeable and utterly disposable; the way we tolerate poverty, want, and kids going to school with empty bellies; the way we tolerate prejudice and bigotry and racism and abuse of all kinds, writing them off as someone else's problem. Indeed, it's also something so seemingly small as the disappearance of civility in political discourse, and the increasing refusal to respect the fundamental dignity of someone who dares to think differently. Christ has glorified our humanity, but only through us can He defend it. Will we let Him? Indeed, will we gladly join Him in defending the worth, the dignity, the infinite value, of each and every human life which in Christ our Father-God so glorifies? Well, will we?

### **New to our library - Three books by Alexander Schmemmann**

**Our Father** From the back cover: *This commentary on the Lord's Prayer has been compiled from a series of broadcasts...on Radio Liberty to listeners in the former Soviet Union. Because this single short prayer of Christ has everything that needs to be said about God, his kingdom, this life, about all of us, it is not an exaggeration to suggest that in the commentary Fr. Schmemmann provides us with a map for seeing anew the purpose and measure of our whole life. Fr. Schmemmann awakens in us a fresh understanding of these familiar petitions.*

**The Liturgy of Death** From the back cover: *"For the Orthodox Church, the time has arrived not to reform the liturgy of death, nor to modernize it (God forbid!), but simply to rediscover it. To rediscover it in its truth and glory means in its connection with the Faith of the Church, with meaning--for the dead, for the living, for the whole world and the entire creation--of Christ's deathless death, and in connection with baptism and Eucharist, with Lent and Pascha, with the whole life of the Church and each one of us, her members. This rediscovery is needed first of all by the Church, but also by our secular culture, for which, whether we know it or not, we are responsible."*

---Alexander Schmemmann

*In these previously unpublished talks, Fr. Alexander Schmemmann critiques contemporary culture's distorted understanding of death. He then examines the Church's rites for burial and her prayers for the dead. Though they are often misunderstood, at the heart of the services Fr. Alexander finds the paschal proclamation: "Christ is risen from the dead, trampling down death by death, and upon those in the tombs bestowing life."*

**Liturgy and Tradition: Theological Reflections of Alexander Schmemmann** from the back cover: *This collection of essays by the preeminent Orthodox liturgical theologian is intended as a companion volume to his Introduction to Liturgical Theology. Here can be traced the development of his thought, particularly his increasingly precise articulation of the nature and method of liturgical theology. Here too can be found Schmemmann's constant stress on liturgy as an eschatological and ecclesial event. He repeatedly challenges the liturgical movement in both East and West to rediscover this understanding of the liturgy, an understanding which was so central in the life of the early church.*