



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.**

Next Services

Saturday, May 26th

**Great Vespers
at 5:00 pm
with Litya/Artoklasia
(Blessing of the Five Loaves)
for the feast**

Sunday, May 27th

**Pentecost
Matins**

9:00 am

Divine Liturgy

10:00 am

at

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



Icon of the First Ecumenical Council held in Nicaea in 325 AD to protect the Church from the heresy of Arianism (that the Son of God was a created being, rather than co-eternal and consubstantial with the Father). Through the Holy Spirit, this council formed the first part of the Nicene Creed.

Sunday after Ascension

(Jn. 17:1-13)

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

It is included here by permission.

Are you living or just existing? There is a difference. Most people are just existing. They wake up in the morning, go to work or school, keep house, eat supper, watch TV, go to bed, and do it all over again the next day, and the day after that, and the day after that, going about their business with no real sense of purpose or meaning in their lives. Their happiness and fulfillment in life depend largely on their circumstances (which are always changing) or their achievements (which are at best temporary). But in John 10:10 Christ Jesus says He came "that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly." So if we're going to experience this kind of real life, we must look to Jesus as the Source of that life.

And that takes us to today's Gospel, John 17:1-13. As we begin reading, Jesus is at the end of His earthly life and ministry. The cross is now an absolute certainty. So at the end of His last meal with His disciples, Jesus utters what we now call the High Priestly Prayer of Jesus. And in it, we see how, even in the face of struggle, suffering, and approaching death, Jesus Himself didn't just exist but lived the abundant life. And in His example we find the answer to that question, "Am I living or just existing?" by posing three more questions.

Firstly, am I living with and in a real and total dependence on the Father? As Jesus entered his hour of trial, verse 1 says that "He lifted up His eyes to heaven and said, 'Father, the hour has come.'" Understand? Jesus wasn't looking at His outward circumstances and trying to figure a way out. He wasn't even looking inward for answers that would make sense of it all. He was looking upward to heaven, to the One He knew was His Father. Even in this hour of crisis, Jesus was living as He had lived all the way along, with complete dependence, not on His own person, or His own humanity, but with complete trust and dependence on the God He knew to be His Father.

In John 15:5 the Lord Jesus tells us bluntly "I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing." Yet too often we as individual Christians, as parishes, as the Church, live in self-reliance, depending primarily on our own natural abilities, our reasoning, our talents, our education, our financial resources, to discern and to accomplish God's work...and then wondering why in the end we produce such meager results. Yet how could it be otherwise, when we're existing by and large completely in the natural?

But when we live with the true openness to and utter dependence upon God that Jesus lived, the natural begins to give way to the supernatural and God begins to work. Think of all the places in the Gospels which say that Jesus "lifted up His eyes". One time he lifted up His eyes to God and stuck his fingers in a deaf man's ears, and the man received his hearing. Another time, He lifted up his eyes in dependence upon God, thanked God and called Lazarus forth from the grave. Yet another time He lifted up his eyes to the Father, took two small fishes and five little loaves, and fed thousands of people. The life that is lived in dependence upon God experiences the supernatural power of God. Can you or I say this about our own life? The question is not "Have I healed anyone lately, or raised someone from the dead, or turned water into wine?" The question is, "Can I look at my life and see where God gave me the victory over a temptation, or poured into me His own strength to keep on keeping on when I wanted to quit, or any of the other things which only God by His all-sufficient grace can do? Can I say that God had His hand upon me and touched the lives of others through me, and I know it was God Who did it?" Can we say this about ourselves, about our parish? The truth is that we forfeit God's power when we substitute dependence upon Him with dependence upon ourselves, other people, or other resources---not because God withdraws His grace and help, but because we're closed to it. If we want to go beyond mere existence to abundant life, we simply must take our eyes off of the natural, off of that which can be seen, and in the everyday, moment by moment, situation by situation, lift our eyes in faith to heaven.

Now secondly, am I living with a sense of divine destiny? Jesus said, "Father, the hour has come." That's a phrase that Jesus uses more than once in His public ministry. Right at the start, at the wedding feast in Cana, when His mother wanted Jesus to show himself as the Messiah, He said, "My hour has not yet come." In John 7:6, when the Lord's disbelieving relatives sarcastically urged Him to go to Jerusalem for the feast of tabernacles, if He was really who He said He was, and show Himself as messiah, "Jesus said to them, 'My time has not yet come.'" And just what was Jesus' time, His hour? It was the hour in which He would be glorified and in which He would glorify the Father. What Jesus' kinsfolk didn't know was that Jesus would be glorified and would glorify God, not by taking the reins of government and sitting on a throne robed in silk and covered with jewels, but by suffering a blood-soak cross and only then rising on the third day. But Jesus knew. He knew that He'd come specifically to die as the atoning sacrifice for the sins of the whole world. He knew His purpose, His destiny; and everything that He said and did led to that moment, that hour. And now the hour had come.

One of the most miserable ways to live is to live aimlessly, without real ultimate purpose, not really knowing ultimately why we're here and what we're supposed to do with our life. We know in our gut that there's got to be more to it than just getting a good job, trying to achieve, feeling good about one's self, and just drifting. God does want each of us and all of us to live with a sense of divine destiny. Why are you here? Why are you worshipping in this parish? Because your family has always belonged here? Good. Because you like lunch after Liturgy? Me too! But understand clearly: God has a greater purpose for you in the body of Christ. He wants to use you in sharing the Gospel and building the Kingdom. And by the Holy Spirit He has given you a gift, a divine ability to carry out the purpose that He has for your life.

Look: 1 Corinthians 12:7 insists that "the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all," for the common good. And discerning, developing, and deploying that gift begins with taking God at His word that "I do have a gift, because God says so; and He doesn't lie." Only then, when we can say that and mean it, are we ready to ask God to show us what His purpose is for us in the Body of Christ, and how He's gifted us. He'll be faithful to reveal it to us, either directly or through other people. And mark you: discovering our gift may well require us to step out in faith and try something we've never done before. It may stretch our comfort zone; it may demand that we risk failure. But God will be faithful, because He's more interested in revealing our purpose in the Body than you and I are in knowing it.

Lastly, am I living with a desire to glorify God? It's as He's facing the cross that Jesus prays, "Glorify Your Son, that Your Son also may glorify You." Jesus' overarching desire in His life and in His death was to glorify the Father. But what does it mean to glorify God? Biblically, the word "glory" has two meanings, and they're interrelated. Firstly, "glory" refers to a manifestation of God's presence, as, for example, in Exodus 40:34, where "the cloud covered the tabernacle of meeting, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle." Secondly, "glory" means to give praise or honor. For Jesus, it was both. In His life, and especially in His words and in His miracles, He revealed the presence of God, as He Himself says in John 14:9 to a befuddled Philip, "He who has seen Me has seen the Father." But His desire was also that through the glory the Father gave Him, He might bring praise and honor to the Father. Even in, or rather, especially through, His death, He sought the glory of the Father.

The desire to glorify God can be costly, but it's very liberating, because the opposite of the desire to glorify God is selfishness. The selfish life is the misery of a life locked in upon itself. The reality of living in a fallen creation is that things won't always go our way; circumstances will certainly change; and people don't always treat us as we think we should be treated. And if all we care about is self, that reality will make us miserable. But when we can honestly say, "Lord, no matter what happens to me, whether I live or die, whether I am treated fairly or unfairly, whether I endure affliction or comfort, let it bring glory and praise to You," we're free of the misery of selfishness. That's what Jesus means when, in Matthew 16:25, He says, "Whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it."

To live rather than just exist demands living with a dependence on the Father, living with a sense of destiny, and living with an overarching desire to bring glory and praise, not to ourselves, but to God. So are you living or just existing today?

New to St. Olympia Lending Library

These Truths We Hold - The Holy Orthodox Church: Her Life and Teachings, compiled and edited by a monk of St. Tikhon's Monastery (Waymart, PA). Excerpted from the preface:

*Many are prone to saying there is no Orthodox culture in America... In fact, this is not necessarily true. It is said by some with humor that tradition is only as old as what our parents and grandparents taught us. Actually, there is profound truth in this. A cultural tradition is not an abstract reconstruction, but those truths, values and behavior commonly practiced, observed, held and understood by one generation and passed on to the next... It is uniquely Orthodox that theology is not solely the scholarly pursuit of a specialized class of clergy. We can, with much benefit, come in touch with what has been traditional for our people in Orthodox parishes for many generations as a theology of piety and practice. The necessary continuity for growth is to have some understanding of these truths commonly held by the Orthodox, and to be able to say, **These Truths we Hold.***

The Hidden Garden: A Story of the Heart by Jane G. Meyer and illustrated by Masha Lobastov. From the back cover:

Within every heart is a hidden garden. We can neglect it until the weeds take over and the flowers wither and die. Or, with the help of Christ, we can care for it and make it a place of beauty, grace and joy. This charming parable will encourage children (and adults) to open the gate to Christ and tend the garden of their heart with loving care.

The Theology of Illness by Jean-Claude Larchet, translated by John and Michael Breck. From the forward:

[This book] offers us fresh insight into the mystery of evil, sin, and illness, and their place within our struggle toward holiness... It gives us renewed hope, by locating the 'problem of pain' in a profoundly theological framework, in which ultimate resolution of the mystery of illness and suffering is provided by the healing touch of Christ Himself, the Physician of our souls and bodies."