



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, June 2nd

**Great Vespers
at 5:00 pm**

Sunday, June 3rd

All Saints

**Matins 9:30 am
(summer hours)**

**Divine Liturgy
10:00 am**

at

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

All welcome!



The icon of Pentecost, as do most icons, focuses less on the historical event and more on the spiritual truth given by the event. We see the apostles gathered seated in circular fashion (a symbol of the unity of the Church) as the Spirit descends on each one. Below their feet, emerging from darkness, is a figure representing the cosmos. He holds twelve scrolls show that the Good News is to be received by all the world. This feast is also considered the birth of the Church. As Alexander Schmemmann said, "The Church is creation as Kingdom." It is an icon of the new Jerusalem.

Pentecost: The Trinity

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

A while back, someone sent me an email that talks about what God is like. It goes like this: "God is little like General Electric: He brings good things to life. God is a little like a Visa card: He's everywhere you want to be. God is like Scotch Tape: you can't see Him, but you know He's there. God is like Alka Seltzer: Oh, what a relief He is. God is like Tide: He gets out the stains that others leave behind. God is like Bounty: He's the Quicker Picker-Upper." Well, those are nice ways to describe what God is like, I suppose... although I worry about a mind paying that much attention to commercials. But it does bring home the fact that because our human brains are limited, it's hard to understand everything there is to know about God. And the most difficult of all is the doctrine of the Holy Trinity. A wag once said, "Try to understand the Trinity, and you'll lose your mind. Deny the truth of the Trinity, and you'll lose your soul." But when trying to explain what little we can about God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, three Persons but only one God, even the best of us is reduced to incoherent babbling.

But we really do need to get a grip on this, and not just because on this present feast of Pentecost Sunday our Liturgy focuses on the mystery of the Holy Trinity. Look: the Trinity is one of the distinctive doctrines of Christian faith and teaching. And just because it's impossible for our brain to understand it completely doesn't mean we should pretend it's not there. In both Deuteronomy 6:5 and Matthew 22:37 we're confronted, not with the suggestion, but with the commandment of God: "You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind." There is an intellectual component to Christianity, and we're expected to think through the teachings of Scripture as best we can. Remember the Bereans in Acts 17:11 who, when Paul preached the Gospel to them, "received the word with all readiness [great eagerness]" but also then "searched the Scriptures daily to find out" if what Paul said was true, in agreement with what they already knew to be God's Word. And that's supposed to be us, too: searching the Scriptures daily to nurture both mind and spirit on the Word of God.

Now when it comes to the Trinity, I must admit that there've been times when I've wondered, "How can I believe something that I cannot and do not fully understand? And just how can God be one and three at the same time? And even if I did understand it, how in the world do I explain it without making other folks confused?" Well, as we look to the Scriptures, we'll see three truths about the Trinity. Firstly, there is the unity of the Trinity. We see it in the creation of the world, because in Genesis 1:26 God says, not "Let Me make man," but "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness." In the Symbol of Faith (the Nicene Creed) we say we put our trust in "God, the Father almighty, Maker of heaven and earth;" but clearly, the Father is involving the other Persons of the Trinity in the creation of mankind. How do we know that by "Us" He's not referring to the angels? Because Genesis 1:1 insists that "in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth," while in verse 2, we have "the Spirit of God hovering over the face of the waters." Colossians 1:16 teaches that "by Him [Christ, the Word] all things were created," while John 1:3 insists concerning the Word that "all things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made." Creation was, in a sense, a cooperative effort.

And the Trinity working together in unity is a precise picture of how things are supposed to be and could be in our life generally and in the life of the Church particularly. To live in God's image, according to God's likeness means to live life as God lives it. And clearly, none of the Persons of the Trinity is a Lone Ranger telling the other Persons of the Trinity "I have no need of You." The life of the Trinity is Three Persons having one mind, one heart, one will, one love. That's what married life and family life should look like and be like. And certainly for us as members of the one Body of Christ, that's what we're supposed to look like and be like: totally united around the purpose of loving God and sharing it with others in the world; all united around the solitary goal of winning the world for Jesus Christ, all a reflection of the unity that already exists within the Trinity. And yeah, I know: our sin and sinfulness, our selfishness and self-centeredness and self-will, keep blowing our unity apart. We argue, we fight, we quarrel, we try to dominate and control, we shift blame and evade responsibility. And then we wonder why our lives are fractured and our world is in tatters. But, thank God, that although at times it may be like that, it doesn't have to stay like that.

And that leads, secondly, the diversity of the Trinity. The members of the Trinity work together, but they don't always do the same things. Look at salvation. The Father governs and sustains the world. On the Cross and in His Resurrection and by His grace the Son redeems the world. And the Holy Spirit changes us, sanctifies us, and gives us the power and grace to change the world. Or consider Romans 8. Verse 28 says that the Father works for our good, because "all things work together for good to those who love God;" verse 34 says that Jesus prays for our good, because He "also makes intercession for us;" and verse 26 says that the Holy Spirit helps us to pray for our good, because "the Spirit also helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered." These are three rather different functions; yet they all work together for the one purpose of manifesting God's glory in the world.

And mirroring that aspect of the life of the Trinity is essential to being, living, and functioning as the Body of Christ. We need to learn how much God loves diversity, rather than getting down and discouraged because we're not like somebody else. How often do we have to hear 1 Corinthians 12:4-6 before we get it and actually trust its truth? "There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of activities, but the same God Who works all in all." Even though I can't do some of the things that other people can do, that's OK, because that's exactly the way God wants it and designed! He deliberately made us and gifted us differently, so that each one of us can contribute something unique to the life of the Body and to the society around us. We're not supposed to be cookie-cutter Christians; we're supposed to reflect the life of the Holy Trinity by being diverse in functions while united in faith and love.

Thirdly, note the intimacy within the Trinity. John 3:35 says plainly that "the Father loves the Son, and has given all things into His hand;" and in John 14:31 Jesus says, "I love the Father, and as the Father gave Me commandment, so I do." Now that tells us that our God is personal; He's intimate; He's a God Who exists in relationship; and that part of that relationship of love is expressed by trust: the Father trusts the Son with "all things," and the Son trusts the Father by doing all that the Father has given Him as "commandment." And that is exactly what God wants to have with you and with me: the same intimacy with us that He has within Himself, expressed in the same trust. And God has gone first in the trust department. He took the initiative in creation, trusting us with His world. He sent His Son to die and rise again for our salvation before even one of us received His gifts of grace and faith. He's made us "great and precious promises" long before we were born again as His children in Holy Baptism. God has, as it were, traveled across heaven and time and space, not just to pursue a relationship with you and with me, but to give us whatever we need to say "Yes" to that relationship, and all that despite the fact that through our sin, rebellion and disobedience we had made God our enemy.

Honestly, now: would you or I do all that even for a friend, much less for somebody who's our enemy? Depending on how badly that enemy had hurt us, we might not even be willing to spit on 'em if they were on fire. So in Romans 5:6-8 St. Paul gets it exactly right: "When we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous person will one die; yet perhaps for a good person someone would even dare to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." Get it? The intimacy within the Trinity spills over into God's relationship with us, despite our unworthiness of it; and the life and love within the Trinity is still the model, still the template, according to which we were first created and by which we're still intended to live in relationship with God and with one another. That can happen, of course, only as we're transformed and empowered by God's all-sufficient grace.

The bottom line? While we can never fully understand the mystery of the Holy Trinity, we can understand enough to see in God's life what the pattern for our life is supposed to be: unity, diversity, intimacy, all shaped and fueled by love and trust. Is that your life and mine today? If not, or not completely, are we asking for the grace to make it so? Upon our answer depends the authenticity of our true humanity.

New to St. Olympia Lending Library

Orthodox Synthesis: The Unity of Theological Thought edited by Joseph J Allen. Excerpted from the back cover:

In this volume, the reader will find examples of the thought of some of the most creative Orthodox theologians in the contemporary world, all brought together to honor Metropolitan Philip on the occasion of his fifteenth anniversary as Primate of the Antiochian Orthodox Archdiocese of North and South America. Although each article in this collection constitutes an independent contribution to its own branch of theology...all are united by a common vision, by the universal, all-encompassing embrace of Orthodoxy, which, as explained in the first chapter, is the true meaning of "synthesis."

Contributors to this festschrift include: Joseph Allen, Georges Khodre, Alexander Schmemmann, John Meyendorff, Stanley Harakas, Demetrios Constantelos, Veselin Kesich, Thomas Hopko, Paul Tarazi and John Boojamra

The Time of the Spirit: Readings Through the Christian Year selected and edited by George Every, Richard Harries and Kallistos Ware. From the back cover:

The purpose of this anthology is to show how time--the sequence of days, months and seasons--can be taken up into Christ, and so be sanctified and figured. In so doing, it reveals some of the unending treasures to be found in three great traditions of the Church: Roman Catholic, Orthodox and Anglican. Beginning in September with the creation of the world, the sequence of sacred time unfolds. In October the theme is the human person; later comes the cycle of Christ's incarnation, death and resurrection leading to Pentecost and the revelation of the Trinity; the book ends in August with the final glory of the age to come. Within each month some of the more important saints or their works are featured.

The tradition of the Church is not so much a long line stretched out in time, as the gathering of time itself into a communion of the living God. Such is the spirit in which this anthology has been compiled. It demonstrates that the past is active and alive in the present... The value of such a book is found in the discovery of the common spirit...expressed in poetry and hymnography, spiritual literature of the great ascetics and monastics, and in the lives of notable saints and church leaders throughout the centuries.