

Week of August 6th 2017

You can reach Fr. Luke at frlukacs@gmail.com

For emergencies, phone (315) 322-8425

Please leave a clear message and include your phone number

Next Services

Saturday, August 12th

Great Vespers at 5:00 pm

Fr. Luke is available to hear confessions following the service

Sunday, August 13th

Divine Liturgy at 10:00 am

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

All welcome!

Sayings from the Desert Fathers

Amma Theodora asked Archbishop Theophilus about some words of the apostle, saying, "What does it mean, 'Knowing how to profit by circumstances?'" (Col. 4:5) He said to her, "This saying shows us how to profit at all times. For example, is it a time of excess for you? By humility and patience buy up the time of excess and draw profit from it. Is it the time of shame? Buy it up by means of resignation and win it. So everything that goes against us can, if we wish, become profitable to us."

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Amma Theodora said, "There was a monk, who, because of the great number of his temptations said, 'I will go away from here.' As he was putting on his sandals, he saw another man who was also putting on his sandals and this other monk said to him, 'Is it on my account that you are going away? Because I go before you wherever you are going.'"

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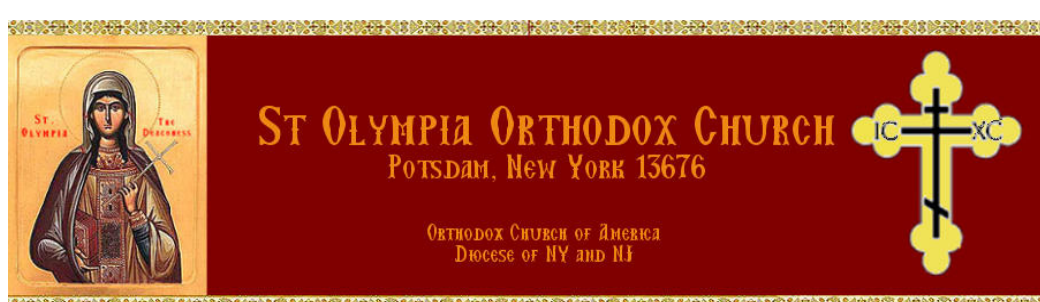
It was said of Abba John the Dwarf that one day he said to his elder brother, "I should like to be free of all care, like the angels who do not work but ceaselessly offer worship to God." So he took off his cloak and went away into the desert. After a week he came back to his brother. When he knocked on the door, he heard his brother say, before he opened it, "Who are you?" He said, "I am John, your brother." But he replied, "John has become an angel, and henceforth he is no longer among men." The other begged him saying, "It is I." However, his brother did not let him in, but left him there in distress until morning. Then, opening the door, he said to him, "You are a man and you must once again work in order to eat." Then John made a prostration before him, saying, "Forgive me."

* * *

It was said of Abba John the Dwarf that he withdrew and lived in the desert at Scetis with an old man of Thebes. His abba, taking a piece of dry wood, planted it and said to him, "Water it every day with a bottle of water, until it bears fruit." Now the water was so far away that he had to leave in the evening and return the following morning. At the end of three years the wood came to life and bore fruit. Then the old man took some of the fruit and carried it to the church saying to the brethren, "Take and eat of the fruit of obedience."

* * *

Abba John the Dwarf said, "If a king wanted to take possession of his enemy's city, he would begin by cutting off the water and the food and so his enemies, dying of hunger, would submit to him. It is the same with the passions of the flesh: if a man goes about fasting and hungry, the enemies of his soul grow weak."



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.

Visit us on Facebook or www.saintolympiaorthodoxchurch.org



We welcome summer visitors to Potsdam, Nino Shvelidze and her aunt (left) and her daughter, Nata Blauvelt, also shown with Fr. Luke (right). Nino and her family are from Tbilisi, Georgia.



Parishioner Jessica Suchy-Pilalis is featured in an interview in the latest issue of *The Wheel*, a journal of Orthodox Christian thought. The article, *Music in the Service of Prayer* by Patricia Bouteneff, may be viewed online at https://static1.squarespace.com/static/54d0df1ee4b036ef1e44b144/t/596e6f4d59cc68a3f95eba91/1500409680278/03_Suchy-Pilalis.pdf

Steadfast Love

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

Is God faithful to His promises? And if so, why are our lives, and the world, still such a mess? That's actually a pretty fundamental question in Christian faith, because although the foundation of our faith is the risen Jesus, the life and living of our faith is our trust in God's promises. The reality in which we live is that we aren't yet in full possession of salvation, of God's wholeness, individually or corporately; and the world as we experience it falls far short of the vision of justice, harmony, and fullness described so vividly in Scripture as God's ultimate will for us and for all creation. And it's our trust that our lives and this troubled world are ultimately in the hands of a loving God Who is moving all things toward His purposes, that makes it possible to encounter life with a measure of confidence and hope. So a lot is at stake in how we understand God's faithfulness.

Our Christian conviction is that, as the Apostle writes in 2 Corinthians 1:20, in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth, all God's fulfills all His promises to our race; that "all the promises of God in Him are Yes and in Him Amen, to the glory of God through us." And St. Luke's accounts of both the nativity of our Lord and the nativity of John the Baptist give a most eloquent and powerful expression to this conviction. His narratives are comprised of stories and songs so important and beloved that we sing them to this day. Almost every single day of the year, at Matins, we sing Mary's song, as recorded in Luke 1:47-55, "My soul magnifies the Lord;" in the Catholic West, Zechariah's song, "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel," is sung every day at Lauds.

But there's a downside to the beauty and power of Luke's story-telling: it can easily and too often does slip into a sentimentality that can distract us from the very question it's designed to address. So it's worth our while to take a long, hard look at how Luke attempts to assure us of God's faithfulness, and what that faithfulness looks like. If we claim too little, our hope is in vain and our proclamation of the Gospel is vain; if we claim too much, we force others and ourselves either into denial about their reality or into cynicism about the Gospel itself.

For the people for whom St. Luke wrote his Gospel, the question of God's faithfulness was anything but academic. Israel had languished in exile and under foreign rule of varying degrees of ruthlessness for centuries. And in 70 A.D., Judea experienced the disaster of the utter destruction of the temple and the holy city of Jerusalem by the Romans after a disastrous revolt. Meanwhile, the newborn Christian community was encountering hostility and opposition from both the Roman empire and other Jews. Add to this the economic exploitation that made daily existence a life-and-death struggle, and we begin to see just how bold Luke's claim is. So what's he really saying?

Luke's account is often seen as the "universal gospel," proclaiming a message of salvation not just for Israel, but for the entire world. And that's true enough. But Luke also wants to make it clear that this universal salvation is inextricably bound up with God's faithfulness to a particular people, the Jews; for it is only to the extent that God proves faithful to His promises to Israel that the message of God's salvation for all becomes trustworthy. And Luke uses his birth narrative to introduce this theme of God's faithfulness. More than any other text, Zechariah's story underscores the connection between the appearance of John and of Jesus with God's faithfulness to Israel. First, of course, his and Elizabeth's inability to conceive calls to mind the stories of many of Israel's most important figures, such as Isaac, Samson, and Samuel, all of whom were, by God's special gift, born to parents previously childless and longing for a child. But it's especially Zechariah's song, often called the "Benedictus," after the Latin translation of the first word, which celebrates God's faithfulness, with some 32 allusions to and quotations from the Old Testament Scriptures. And the point, of course, is that what God had earlier promised, He's now fulfilling.

Rather frustratingly, our Gospel does not include the whole of Zechariah's song. But let's note that the song falls naturally into two parts. Verses 68-75 largely use the past tense to bless and praise God for His faithfulness: God "has visited [looked favorably on] and redeemed His people, and has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of His servant David;" and thus, God has fulfilled His promise "to perform the mercy promised to our ancestors and to remember [make active the terms of] His holy covenant." But verses 76-79 use the future tense, anticipating more specifically what John himself will accomplish in God's plan; John "will be called the prophet of the Highest" and "will go before the face of the Lord to prepare His ways, to give knowledge of salvation to [God's] people by the remission of their sins" and will announce that promised Messiah Who will "give light to those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death" and "guide our feet into the way of peace." The first half expresses God's redemption in familiar Old Testament terms: a mighty savior who delivers us from our enemies, from those who hate us. It sounds a lot like "shock and awe," a lot like the kind of "us good guys versus those evil doers" that still characterizes so much of our interaction with the world.

And that's exactly what makes the second half of the song so surprising, and so crucial for our question of how God shows faithfulness to His promises in Jesus. Firstly, John will prepare the way of the Lord to give knowledge of salvation to God people. How is that salvation given and demonstrated? "By the remission [forgiveness] of their sins. In His public ministry our Lord shocked and scandalized many of His contemporaries with the seemingly reckless way He throws around God's forgiveness, with Zacchaeus and the paralytic, for example. Secondly, Jesus will bring "light to those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death." How? "Through the tender mercy of our God." And the Greek word we here translate as "mercy" comes from the Greek word for "entrails, guts;" so it's a deep, wrenching compassion. Is that how you and I picture God: as Someone Who cares so passionately for you and for me that it makes His guts hurt? Too often that's not how we see God...which is why we so often experience our life as darkness and living death. But in His willing acceptance even of the Cross, Jesus demonstrates the depths of God's "tender mercy" for you and for me. And by the way, that same "mercy" is in the quality Jesus demands above all others from his followers, as He tells us in Luke 6:36, "Therefore be merciful, just as your Father also is merciful." Thirdly, God's salvation will "guide our feet into the way of peace:" not just an absence of conflict, but a way of being, a way of living, in the world that fosters God's kind of peace, in which justice, righteousness and love govern our lives.

Forgiveness, mercy and compassion, peace: these are not states of being, but actions, God positive active ongoing engagement in our lives. So if/when we triumphantly claim that God has completely fulfilled His promises in the Body of Christ, we're at best only half right and are fundamentally misunderstanding the nature of God's activity in the world. God shows faithfulness to His promises when the Gospel so envelops us through the Holy Spirit that we live out these actions in our daily lives, and form communities characterized by them. The Gospel is not first and foremost "doctrine," theological truth, although it is also that; rather, it is first and foremost a way of living, an alternative way of being in the world, living by different values, different priorities, and above all else a different loyalty. We still live in the shadow of death, and with many perplexing questions; but what God has done in Christ gives us grounds for genuine hope and for genuine peace-making in a world torn apart by conflicts big and small.

One final note: by emphasizing the surprising or unexpected nature of God's faithfulness in Christ, let's not think that this is a uniquely "Christian" or "New Testament" way, in contrast to a "Jewish" or "Old Testament" way of understanding. God's faithfulness is rooted in and the fulfilling of His love for and dealings with His people Israel; so if anything, God's faithfulness in Jesus shows continuity and consistency; that His faithfulness is not a one-off but a constant part of Who God is and how God operates---and that therefore God's faithfulness to His promises is something on which we can always count. As the Apostle says in 2 Timothy 2:13, even "if we are faithless, He remains faithful; He cannot deny Himself."

As A Generation of Disciples and Leaders

Conference Leader:

Very Reverend Dr. Joseph Purpura



**ANNUAL
DIOCESE
CLERGY
CONFERENCE
September 5-6
Wappingers Falls NY**

Six Flags

Thursday, August 24th
Jackson, NJ

Planning Ahead

**Parish Rummage Sale
to benefit our building fund
Saturday, August 26, 2017**

Please collect items that you can contribute to this fund-raiser. We ask that you pre-price these items before you bring them.

Archbishop Michael's next visit to Potsdam will be:

**Saturday-Sunday,
September 9-10, 2017**