



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.*

Our priest is Fr. Peter Irfan, Acting Rector.

You may reach him at 716-342-8520 (cell) or at fatherpeter777@yahoo.com.

Please join us for prayer and fellowship.

Divine Liturgies are held every Sunday at 10 am.

Great Vespers are held every Saturday evening

Next Services

Saturday, November 17th

Great Vespers

****6:30 pm ****

**at Knowles Conference
Center MPR,
SUNY Potsdam**

Sunday, November 18th

Matins

8:45 am

Divine Liturgy

10:00 am

Fellowship to follow

at

St. Olympia Chapel

123 Main Street

Potsdam, NY

PLEASE JOIN US THIS COMING WEEKEND

**We will be blessed by the presence of Vlada Michael on
Nov. 17th -18th.**

**On Saturday, Nov. 17th, Mother Sophronia will present a lec-
ture on angels in iconography in Knowles Conference Center,
SUNY Potsdam campus. The presentation will be preceded
by Great Vespers with Vlada Michael, also in Knowles.**

**On Sunday morning, Nov. 18th, Vlada Michael will be with
us at St. Olympia Chapel for the Divine Liturgy and will be
with us for the fellowship meal that follows.**

**Please help us to spread the word. Invite your friends! The
following poster is attached as a separate .pdf if you'd like
to print it yourself, or stop by the chapel and pick up some
copies.**



ENCOUNTERING ANGELS

**Word and Image:
Celestial Beings
in Byzantine Iconography**

**Presentation by
Mother Sophronia Hofstead,
Iconographer**

**Saturday, November 17th, 7:30 pm
Knowles Conference Center MPR
SUNY Potsdam**

**Great Vespers (Evening Prayer) Service at 6:30 pm
also at Knowles MPR**

**Sponsored by SUNY Potsdam Campus Ministry
and St. Olympia Orthodox Church of Potsdam**



24th Sunday of Pentecost:

Ephesians 2:14-22

Note: the following article was written by an anonymous contributor.

It is included here by permission.

When you hear the word "church," what picture pops into your mind: the building? the bishop and clergy? the parish council? the chaos of the annual meeting? Well in verse 19 of today's Epistle, Ephesians 2:14-22, the holy Apostle Paul teaches us that "the Church" is not first and foremost an organization; even less is it the building; rather the Church is a family: "Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household [the family] of God." And it's only as you and I see ourselves as God's family and live in relationship with one another as a loving family, that we can become what 1 Peter 2:5 says we, the Church, are called to become: "living stones...being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ." Get it? The honesty and authenticity of our worship, of our "spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God," depends upon the authenticity of our relationship with God our Father and with one another. It's only as we love one another as genuine brothers and sisters, as true family in Christ, that we are really and truly the Church.

Oh yes, we can have the outward form of the Church. We can have all the right structures, perform all the correct services, and point to ourselves as the one, true, visible, earthly Church and say that we are indeed the "Orthodox," the "right-believing" Church. But we have only to look with brutal honesty at ourselves and our behaviors to see how easily we, as the Apostle describes in 2 Timothy 3:5, can have "a form of godliness but denying its power." We get very good at wearing our "church face;" but are we actually living out in the everyday our relationship with God as our Father and our relationship with each other as brothers and sisters in God's family?

However, it's not love alone that's crucial in creating and being a family; there's also honesty, truth. Truth always matters in any relationship because every healthy relationship is built on truth. We look at young couples, and often say that "Love is blind." But that's not love; it's infatuation. Real love is born and nurtured only as each sees the other as and for who he/she really is, warts and all, and then chooses to be faithful in the gifting of self to that other.

And for believers especially, followers of Him Who is "the Way, the Truth, and the Life," truth is always central. In John 8:31-32 our blessed Lord tells us, "If you abide [make your home] in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." Further, 1 John 4:6 bids us distinguish clearly between "the spirit of truth and the spirit of error." But hey! Doesn't Paul say in Romans 13:8, "Owe no one anything except to love one another, for he who loves another has fulfilled the law?" Yup. But in 1 Timothy 1:5 the very same Paul insists that love and truth go hand-in-hand: "Now the purpose of the commandment is love from a pure heart, from a good conscience, and from sincere faith." As much as we must concern ourselves with loving one another as Christ has loved us, we must also concern ourselves with purity of teaching, because without truth our faith becomes weak and crumbles, and the vigor of biblical agape love degenerates into sheer sentimentality.

So we have to grasp and embrace, first of all, the foundation upon which household of God is built: "Now therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone." In building a house, what's constructed first: the roof or the foundation? Obviously, the first thing one lays down is a foundation strong enough to hold up the house and strong enough to withstand the eroding forces of nature, like wind, rain and, in northern climates, three feet of snow on the roof.

Well, the foundation upon which God's family is built is the teaching of the apostles and prophets, and above all else, the teaching and most especially the person of Jesus Christ Himself. And that foundation is strong precisely because it's laid by God. It doesn't rely on the shifting sands of human opinion to determine the way of salvation or teaching or practice, because, as it says in 2 Timothy 3:16, "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness." Similarly, 2 Peter 1:21 insists that "Prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit." God's Word given through the apostles and prophets is straight and true because it's God-breathed. And Hebrews 1:1-2 proclaims that "God, Who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son;" so the words of Jesus are nothing less than the direct words of God. Thus, while human ideas have come and gone over the centuries, and people and times change, God's Word remains the sure and certain guide to God's will, all the more so because from Genesis to Revelation the central theme of God's Word is Jesus Christ. The Old Testament foretells Him; the New Testament presents Him; and it's the Church's Word to live in Him and to proclaim Him in every age and in every land.

That leads us to Christ the Cornerstone. Before the dawn of poured concrete foundations, the cornerstone of a building was absolutely crucial. It was the first stone laid for the foundation, and it determined all the angles and all the lines for the rest of the building. And that, says 1 Peter 2:6, is exactly Who and What Jesus is for us: "a chief Cornerstone, elect, precious, and he who believes on Him will by no means be put to shame." The heart and center of Christianity is not first and foremost a pile of doctrine and/or a manual on ethical behavior; it's a Person, Jesus Christ. Not just what He says in His teaching but Who He is in His Person is the cornerstone of Christian faith and life, what sets the parameters and direction of our thinking, doing and above all else our being.

What, after all, is the object, the goal, the purpose, of Christian faith and Christian living? The catechism answer I learned as a child was "God made me to know Him, to love Him, and to serve Him in this life, and to be happy with Him forever in heaven." As I child and young man, I put the emphasis on the actions: "know, love, serve;" but as an old man I put the emphasis on "Him," because I've come to understand the meaning of "grace," of God's love in action on our behalf. My purpose, as a human and as a Christian, is not firstly doing, but being acted upon by God's grace. Note in Romans 8:29 God's purpose for us: "to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren;" and that happens, says Romans 12:2, as we choose "not to be conformed to this world" but to "be transformed by the renewing of [our] mind." The Apostle puts it another way in Ephesians 4:15, where he explains that our goal is to "grow up in all things into Him Who is the Head, Christ." Get it? Jesus Christ Himself is the pattern, the role model, the template for our being, for our thinking, for our daily living, for our relationships with God and other people. And Hebrews 12:1-2 bids us "run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto [keep our focus on] Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith," precisely because the goal, the finish line, is so to cooperate with and be transformed by God's grace that when someone looks at us they see Jesus and hear Jesus speaking and watch Jesus acting. Being "Christ-like" is not just a nice ideal; it's the very purpose of our existence.

And that leads us to the reality that the Church is made up of believers. And by "believers" we don't mean people who say "Yeah, I think there's a god out there somewhere" and/or who accept this or that statement of doctrine as true. While truth is certainly central, faith is more than just accepting the truth; faith is trusting that truth and trusting the God Who speaks that truth, trusting them with my very life. The Symbol of Faith [Nicene Creed] does not say "I believe that there is one God, the Father Almighty;" it says "I believe in [I put my trust in] one God, the Father Almighty." Look, in John 14:9 our Lord says, "He who has seen Me has seen the Father." What's God like? Does He love me or loathe me? Does He want to be my Friend or my Enemy? We only have to look at Jesus to know. But knowing that somebody loves me and wants to be my friend isn't enough, is it? It's only by interacting with that person, by risking really opening up to him/her and letting him/her into my daily life, that I can come genuinely to trust, to believe in, and really commit to him/her. The Church is made up of people in various stages of developing and deepening that relationship with the risen Jesus: some are beginners, some are like an old married person who's come to love and trust his/her spouse absolutely, and most are somewhere in between. So the question is not, "Is my trust in Him perfect and complete?" The question is "Am I risking really opening up to Him and letting Him into my daily life?" What's your answer---and mine---today?

The nativity fast is almost upon us. It begins on November 15th.