



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 at 5 pm.**

Next Services

Saturday, November 10th

**Great Vespers
5:00 pm**

*Fr. Peter is available to hear
confessions before Vespers by
appointment.*

Sunday, November 11th

**Matins
8:45 am**

**Divine Liturgy
10:00 am**

**Fellowship to follow
at**

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

Upcoming Events:

Marianthi Stakos - Trumpet

Junior Recital

Saturday, November 10th, 1 pm

Hosmer Hall, Crane School of Music, SUNY Potsdam

*We congratulate Mariathi on this milestone in her academic career
and wish her well!*

Vladyka Michael will visit our parish on the weekend of Nov. 17th-18th. On Saturday, Nov. 17th, Mother Sophronia will present a lecture on angels in iconography in Knowles Conference Center, SUNY Potsdam campus. The presentation will be preceded by Great Vespers, also in Knowles. On Sunday morning, Nov. 18th, Vladyka Michael will be with us at St. Olympia Chapel for the Divine Liturgy and will be with us for the fellowship meal that follows.

We need help distributing the following poster. It 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**



23rd Sunday of Pentecost:

Ephesians 2:4-10

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

Have you noticed from TV and movies our current culture's fascination with zombies, "the walking dead," just as some years ago there was a fascination with vampires, another kind of "living dead?" Why? One can assume that it has to do with our desperate human search to find a way to escape death, only to realize that there can be something worse than death. After all, what could be more frightening than an evil or a suffering that cannot be destroyed even by death? Think how terrible it would be to be one of those trapped in such a "living death." But if truth, as they say, is stranger than fiction, it can also be more horrible than fiction. The specter of fictitious zombies wandering about in mournful trances holds little terror for those who live and move in the real world. But there are the spiritual dead that you and I encounter every day. Such lifeless souls are not only very real, they are all around us, and their condition is truly the stuff of nightmares. We ought to know, because we used to be one of them.

And that brings us to today's Epistle, Ephesians 2:4-10, which begins, "But 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 (by grace you have been saved)." Now if you get the feeling that this "But God" is a rather abrupt beginning, you're right. In verses 1-3, St. Paul reminds us that apart from Christ we once "were dead in trespasses and sins" and that because we were "sons of disobedience" and "conducted ourselves in the lusts [desires] of our flesh [our self in rebellion against God]," we "were by nature children of wrath [people who deserved the consequences of our sin]," just like everybody else. Yet it is that very ugly truth which makes so wonderful those words "But God..." Our mess was self-made; our sin was self-chosen; our condemnation was self-imposed. "But God, who is rich in mercy," couldn't stand it! He couldn't stand to see the creatures He had made, the people whom He loved, so thoroughly and eternally destroy themselves and sent His only begotten Son to rescue, redeem, and restore us to living relationship with the living God.

Now, maybe it's weird; but I gotta wonder: did the walking dead in those zombie movies realize that they were dead? Maybe; maybe not. But it's certainly true that the true "walking dead" we encounter today have no idea they are dead. Oh, maybe they're aware that we regard them as spiritually dead apart from Jesus Christ, but they undoubtedly write us off as religious nuts and fanatics. They don't feel dead; so we believers must be the ones with the problem. Ah, but that not feeling dead is something we too experienced; it's just that some of us were too young to remember. But we too were "dead in trespasses and sins:" not only because we have actually sinned, but because we were born as condemned sinners.

We look at little babies and think they're just so cute and innocent...and then, when they turn two, wonder what demon has possessed them. But the behavior of the "terrible twos" was there from the instant of conception; as Psalm 51:5 so accurately observes, "Indeed, in guilt was I born, a sinner since my mother conceived me." We too, "even when we were dead in trespasses," were rescued, saved at a time when we were powerless to help ourselves. In Holy Baptism we were saved at a time when we were spiritually dead, but neither knew nor cared. Verse 5 says simply that "Even when we were dead in trespasses [God] made us alive together with Christ."

And that should help us to appreciate just how foolish it is to imagine that at our new birth in Christ we were anything other than unworthy recipients of an absolutely priceless gift. How silly it is to think that a corpse can do anything to raise itself out of its spiritual death to new life. That's why, not just once, but twice, St. Paul proclaims "by grace you have been saved...For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves [not because of anything you have done]; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so lest anyone should boast."

Why did God do such a thing? Why, when we rightly acknowledge that there was nothing good or worthy in any human being, did God send His Son, Jesus, to secure our rescue? "But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us...made us alive together with Christ." Our rescue stands as an unalterable testimony to the love and mercy of our God. And that's something each of us needs to take very personally, because it reveals the love God has for you personally and for me personally. God the Father sent His Son and then called each of us to saving faith in that Son as our Savior, because He loves each of us individually and determined from all eternity to have mercy on each of us individually. God's grace not only quickens the dead, but also demonstrates His mercy toward those who in no way have earned such mercy.

And yet there's more. In verses 6-10, the Apostle also teaches us that God's grace enables our participation with Christ. "God...raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus...And we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them." Far from being the spiritually "walking dead," we are now alive and seated with Christ "in the heavenly places;" we are joined to Christ our Lord in all ways. Not only are we joined to Him in His death, we are also joined to Him in His resurrection and in His subsequent glory in Heaven.

Is that how you and I see ourselves? Do you and I see ourselves as the living, breathing evidence of the wealth of God's grace? But that's the truth about us. Our God saved us "so that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding [immeasurable] riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus." In other words, God can and will use us in both Heaven and here on earth (if we'll let Him) as the bright, shining examples of His grace, His undeserved love and mercy toward those who were in no way deserving or worthy. He freely gave that which could never be earned.

So how is that supposed to affect our individual lives going forward? Well, it's not that you and I now need to feel some tremendous pressure not to let God down. God didn't create in us a new life and a new relationship with Himself comprised only of rules, rubrics and rituals, and that we can live only by being shamed or guilt-tripped into compliance. Our relationship with God is like any other relationship with someone we love: we do what pleases them precisely because in love we want to please them. And yeah, I know: our sinful flesh which wants anything but such loving obedience. In Romans 7:19 St. Paul speaks for all of us when he laments, "For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice." That's why St. Paul reminds us of our high calling: "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them." Our heavenly Father takes great delight in our acts of obedience and love, just as any parent delights in their child doing well. Does loving obedience earn the favor of God? No, not any more that parents love their children only conditionally upon the child's good behavior. Parents love their kids even when parents fighting the temptation to strangle the little brat. And children love their parents even when the old folks are being impossibly controlling. Love, and especially God's love, is always a free gift, not wages for good behavior.

But if we really grasp with head and heart that we were really and truly "dead in trespasses and sins," and that God really and truly has "made us alive together with Christ," not because we earned it or deserved it, but "by grace [we] have been saved through faith" as "the gift of God," how can it be anything other than our great joy to want and in the power of the Holy Spirit to try to live as a loving child of our loving Father? We gather here to make Eucharist, to "give thanks to the Lord." So let us give thanks to God for the life that He creates and sustains in us and for the work He has given us to do as His beloved children and heirs. And through our reception of the Lord's own body and Blood, let us open ourselves to receive from the same God Who rescued us the grace to walk worthy of our calling and position.