



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, March 23rd

Reader's Vespers - 5:00 pm

Sunday, March 24th

**Divine Liturgy - 10:00 am
Fellowship to follow**

**Monday, March 25th
Feast of the Annunciation**

**Divine Liturgy - 10:00 am
at**

**St. Olympia Chapel
123 Main Street
Potsdam, NY, 13676**

Parish update:

**Fr. Peter will hear confessions
by appointment only for the
next several weeks while he
recovers from pneumonia.**

**We will resume our normal
schedule of Matins and Vespers
at that time.**

Also:

**Daily Vespers at 5 pm
St. Olympia Hermitage
Edwards, NY**

Visitors are welcome to attend.

**E-mail:
mothersophronia@gmail.com
to confirm and for directions.**

Exploring Christian Faith

St. Olympia Orthodox Church is hosting a series of events on selected Saturdays following Vespers.

Yerei-san: Confessions of a Samurai

Saturday, March 23rd, 6:00 pm

Fr. Nikolay is a priest of the Japanese Orthodox Church. Earlier in his life he was a professional karate fighter. His brother is the boss of the powerful Yakuza clan, a violent Japanese gang. One day, he couldn't ignore the cruelty of the members of a rival gang and fights to protect a young girl. Gang war becomes inevitable and Fr. Nikolay is ordered by his bishop to leave Japan in order to save his life and also have time for repentance. He finds refuge in a remote Russian village but his new home is torn by both internal and external conflict. Father Nikolay's new fight is one for the villagers' souls while he works and prays to restore the remnants of the village church.

This movie had a profound influence on the Japanese-American actor who played Fr. Nikolay, Cary Hiroyuki Tagawa. He was received into the Orthodox church just before the release of this movie in 2015. You can read about his personal journey at: <http://myocn.net/cary-hiroyuki-tagawa-star-of-priest-san-samurais-confession-becomes-orthodox/> (links in this newsletter are not live) and from there you can access several interviews on YouTube.

Join us for lenten pizza and a movie!

This Russian film with English subtitles is not rated and contains violence.



St. Ephraim the Syrian is widely known for giving us the core of our Lenten daily prayers:

**O Lord and Master of my life!
Take from me the spirit of sloth, despair, lust of power, and idle talk.
But give rather the spirit of chastity, humility,
patience and love to your servant.
Yea, O Lord and King! Grant me to see my own transgressions
and not to judge my brother, for blessed are you, unto ages of ages. Amen.**

His hymns and writings also form a vital part of our Orthodox literature and worship.

Two Discourses by St. Ephraim the Syrian

Translated by Fr. Ephrem Lash

Translator's note: The ascetic writings in Greek attributed to St. Ephraim the Syrian [† 373] are some of the basic texts of Orthodox monasticism. The Triodion lays down that they are to be read at Matins each weekday morning in Lent, after the first two readings from the Psalter. Together with the Lausiac History of Palladius, prescribed to be read after the third reading of the Psalter and the third Ode of the Canon, the Ladder of St John of Sinai and the Instructions of St Theodore the Studite, they should form the regular diet of non-biblical spiritual reading for Orthodox Christians.

ON PSALMODY

All this and much more could be said about love. But let us return to the subject and speak of repentance and the coming judgment. For we should always meditate on these things, because the day of the Lord is coming like a thief in the night. Therefore by night and day, look to your last hour and meditate on the law of the Lord day and night. Say many things to God and few to humans. If you stretch out your hand to work, let your mouth sing psalms and your mind pray. Let psalmody be continually on your mouth, for when God is being named he puts the demons to flight and sanctifies the singer.

Psalmody is calm of soul, author of peace. Psalmody is convenor of friendship, union of the separated, reconciliation of enemies. Psalmody attracts the help of the Angels, is a weapon in night-time fears, repose of the day's toils, safety for infants, adornment for the old, consolation for the elderly, most fitting embellishment for women. It makes deserts into homes, market places sober. It is the ABC for beginners, progress for the more advanced, confirmation for the perfect, the voice of the Church. It makes festivals radiant; it creates mourning that is in accordance with God, for psalmody draws tears even from a heart of stone. Psalmody is the work of the Angels, the commonwealth of heaven, spiritual incense. Psalmody is enlightenment of souls, sanctification of bodies.

Let us, brethren, never stop making psalmody our meditation, both at home and on the road, both sleeping and waking, speaking to ourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs. Psalmody is the joy of those who love God. It banishes idle chatter, brings laughter to an end, reminds us of the judgment, rouses the soul towards God, joins the choir of the Angels. Where there is psalmody with compunction, there God is, with the Angels. Where the songs of the opponent are, there is God's wrath, and 'woe!' is the reward of laughter. Where sacred books and readings are, there are the joy of the just and the salvation of the listeners. Where there are harps and dances, there is the darkening of men and women, and a festival of the Devil.

O the wicked cunning and contrivance of the Devil! How he trips each one through craft, and deceives them and persuades them to do evil as though it were good! Today they decide to chant, tomorrow they dance with enthusiasm. Today they are Christians, tomorrow heathens. Today of good repute, tomorrow pagans. Today servants of Christ, tomorrow rebels against God. Do not be deceived. No one can be servant of two lords, as it is written. You cannot serve God and dance with the Devil.

As true servants of Christ, let us serve him, let us worship him, let us devote ourselves to him, let us stay by him until our last breath, and let us not obey the Devil, for he goes about like a roaring lion seeking whom he may swallow up, whom he may deceive. Resist him stoutly, as soldiers of Christ, serving him and staying by him. Do not chant today and dance tomorrow. Do not repent today for your sins and tomorrow dance for your destruction. Do not read today and play the harp tomorrow. Do not be master of yourself today and come forward tomorrow reeling and dizzy and the laughing stock of all.

Do not, brethren, let us lose like this the moment of our salvation, by playing about and being played about with. Be like a good farmer, working and taking care. My brother, do not make light of the provisions for eternal life. Do not reject fasting, do not desert vigil, do not be despondent about sleeping on the ground, do not abandon psalmody. For these things and things like them escort you to life and joy and gladness and eternal repose. Love silence rather than wicked conversation. Conversations about worldly things separate the mind from God.

ON PRAYER

Not to sin is truly blessed; but those who sin should not despair, but grieve over the sins they have committed, so that, through grief they may again attain blessedness. It is good, then, to pray always and not to lose heart, as the Lord says, And again the Apostle says, 'Pray without ceasing', that is by night and by day and at every hour, and not only when coming into the church, and not bothering at other times. But whether you are working, or lying down to sleep, traveling, eating, drinking, sitting at table do not interrupt your prayer, for you do not know when he who demands your soul is coming. Don't wait for Sunday or a feast day, or a different place, but, as the Prophet David says, 'in every place of his dominion'.

Whether you are in church, or in your house, or in the country; whether you are guarding sheep, or constructing buildings, or present at drinking parties, do not stop praying. When you are able, bend your knees, when you cannot, make intercession in your mind, 'at evening and at morning and at midday'. If prayer precedes your work and if, when you rise from your bed, your first movements are accompanied by prayer, sin can find no entrance to attack your soul.

Prayer is a guard of prudence, control of wrath, restraint of pride, cleansing of malice, destruction of envy, righting of impiety. Prayer is strength of bodies, prosperity of a household, good order of a city, might of a kingdom, trophy of war, assurance of peace. Prayer is a seal of virginity, fidelity in marriage, weapon of travelers, guardian of sleepers, courage of the wakeful, abundance for farmers, safety of those who sail. Prayer is an advocate for those being judged, remission for the bound, consolation for the grieving, gladness for the joyful, comfort for mourners, a feast on birthdays, a crown for the married, a shroud for the dying. Prayer is converse with God, equal honor with the Angels, progress in good things, averting of evils, righting of sinners. Prayer made the whale a house for Jonas, brought Hezekiah back to life from the gates of death, turned the flame to wind of moisture for the Youths in Babylon. Through prayer Elias bound the heaven not to rain for three years and six months.

See, brethren, what strength prayer has. There is no possession more precious than prayer in the whole of human life. Never be parted from it; never abandon it. But, as our Lord said, let us pray that our toil may not be for nothing, 'When you stand in prayer, forgive if you have anything against anyone, that your heavenly Father may forgive you your faults'.

Do you not see, brethren, that we toil for nothing when we pray, if we have enmity against someone? And again the Lord says, 'If you offer your gift at the altar, and there you remember that someone has something against you, leave your gift before the altar, and go first and be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift'. Therefore, it is clear that if you do not do this first, all that you offer will be unacceptable, but if you do the Master's bidding, then implore the Lord with boldness, saying, 'Forgive me my debts, Master, as I have forgiven my brother, so fulfilling your commandment. I, weak though I am, have forgiven'. For the Lover of mankind will answer, 'If you have forgiven, I too will forgive. If you have pardoned, I too will pardon your sins. For I have authority on earth to forgive sins. Forgive and you will be forgiven'.

See God's unfathomable love for humankind. See God's unbounded goodness. Hear instant salvation of your souls.