

A Voice in the Wilderness

The Newsletter of St. George Orthodox Christian Church



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Christ is in our Midst! He is and ever shall be!



Volume 11 Issue 541

23rd Sunday after Pentecost-Parable of the Foolish Rich Man

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The parable in today's Gospel is a brief, but powerful story. If every person were to learn from it, millions of our fellow human beings would not die from hunger or poverty. In addition, many rich people would not suffer from agonizing worry and anxiety over their possessions, and maybe save their souls from being lost due to their wealth.

Let's look at the rich person in the

parable. God gave him fruitful land with an amazing yield of crops. Instead of rejoicing in God and glorifying him for this blessing, he was overwhelmed with worry: "What shall I do, since I have no room to store my crops?"

"What shall I do?" People who say this usually have no house to live in, no clothes to protect them from the weather, or bread to give to their children to keep them alive! But a rich person who suddenly becomes even richer saying these same words is outrageous. Sadly, this is our reality. There are countless examples of wealthy people who suffer serious psychological problems and anxiety over how to maintain and increase their wealth.

Those who cling to material things and are constantly trying to get more
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++ 23rd Sunday after Pentecost ++
+ Entrance of the Theotokos +

Epistle: Ephesians 2:4-10

Gospel: Luke 12: 16-21

St. George Orthodox Christian Church is a community of believers who strive to live a life according to the Gospel of Christ and teachings of the Church.

We worship God in Trinity -
Father+Son+Holy Spirit.

We are dedicated to living out Christ's commandment to, *Love the Lord your God with all your heart, ad with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself.*

A talk on the Divine Liturgy, Metropolitan Athanasios of Limassol (part 7)

Thus, weeping and tears are the main "instrument" for leading a spiritual life. Weeping gives birth to peace in our souls. We must learn to weep. St. Paisios the Athonite said that in his hometown in Cappadocia, the Turks were perplexed when they would walk around the village at night: "What is this? These Romei mourn their dead all night long."

The Turks heard weeping and sobbing and thought that the Greek Christians were crying at night over their dead relatives.

They couldn't understand that people were praying. The Cappadocian Greeks were very simple and sincere people. In accord with Church Tradition, they prayed with tears and truly mourned the dead—their dead souls. We should also weep for our souls this way.

For a man to have peace and the sweet presence of God in his soul, he must have the sweet pain of repentance; he must learn to open his heart at least once a day that repentant prayer might

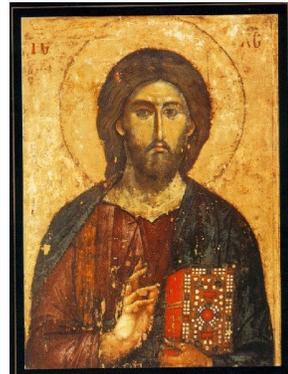
flow from him, as the Psalm says: *I will pour out before Him my supplication* (Ps. 141:2). It's as if you uncork some full vessel, and all contents of your heart, your pain, and your spiritual labor come pouring out.

Christ is our peace and His presence fills our souls with peace. Christ visits the penitent man. Christ doesn't visit he who doesn't repent, even if he's a good man. He comes to hearts that are experiencing suffering and pain (mainly from
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We invite all to worship in our services. Sunday Divine Liturgy begins at 9:30 AM

If you have any questions about the church or would like to speak with our pastor, please call Fr. Matthew at 607-280-1586

Glory be to Jesus Christ.
Glory be Forever.





As the deliverer
of captives
and defender
of the poor,
healer of the infirm
and champion of kings,
victorious great
martyr George
intercede with Christ
our God that our souls
may be saved.

News and Notes

We welcome all who are worshipping with us today. We are also happy to announce that coffee social has resumed following the Divine Liturgy.

Pray without ceasing (1 Thess. 5.17)

Please keep the following in your prayers: Mother Onufria, Fr. Michael, Meg, Larissa, Jack, Stephen, Evan, Ryan, Anatoly, Alexey, Heidi, Mackenzie, Mike, Jessica, Lisa, Jeff, Bonnalee, Joanne, Sesu, Skip, Georgia, Chuck, Pam, Colleen, the homeless, the hungry, victims of abuse and violence, & those persecuted for their faith in Christ

Christ and the Gospel

Christ said “For my sake and the Gospel’s.” He put Himself at the center of what mattered most in life. He was God’s final revelation to the world. He came not only to preach the Gospel but also to exemplify the Gospel by faithfulness, obedience and self-sacrifice. The message of the Gospel is nothing less than the message about Christ Himself and what He accomplished for our salvation. He is the

fulness of God’s presence in history. He is the incarnation of God’s love and forgiveness for the world. He is the foremost witness of God’s truth for which He suffered and died on the Cross.

“For my sake and the Gospel’s.” Christ calls for a decisive change of orientation of the self, a radical switch of outlook from purely worldly values and pleasures to Christ-like values and attributes. Think and do things to honor Christ. Think according to the thoughts of Christ in order to acquire the “mind” of Christ. Act according to the example of Christ in order to grow into the likeness and maturity of Christ. Love as He loved in order that we may abide in God’s love for “God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him.” (1 John 4:16).

The Good Shepherd calls us to practice His attributes of humility, self-sacrifice, forgiveness and love for others, by which the world might think that we “lose” our life. That’s part of the cost of being a disciple.

A talk on the Divine Liturgy, cont’d from p.1

their repentance) and that seek the mercy of God.

Speaking of repentance—I remember an incident from my life associated with a modern ascetic, Elder Philotheos (Zervakos) from the island of Paros. When I went to visit him, I was eighteen or nineteen, I was a student at the Theological Faculty. To be honest, I didn’t have any particular desire to go see the Elder. I agreed to it only because a really good friend urged me to visit him, and so persistently, that I was almost forced to go.

It was uncomfortable to refuse, because this man even bought me a ticket to Paros. There was nowhere I could hide. I went with one other student. We got on the bus in Thessaloniki and rode to Piraeus, where we boarded the ship and sailed to Paros. We met with Elder Philotheos there, who truly was a great saint.

At that time, I was quite determined to immediately go to Mt. Athos right after finishing college. During Confession with the Elder, I told him about my decision to go to the Holy

Mountain.

“Go,” he said. “And where will you go there?”

“To Fr. Joseph.”

“The Cypriot? I’ve known him for a



long time.”

Elder Philotheos gave me a lot of good instruction, spiritually strengthened me, and read the prayer of absolution. As I was leaving, he added:

“I want to give you something...”

Several of my classmates had gone to see the Elder shortly before this and they asked for something to remember him by, so the Elder gave each of them something. The Elder gave one of my classmates, a deacon, a handkerchief.

“Take this handkerchief, you’ll need it.”

The guys returned with their gifts. The deacon wanted to hear something prophetic from the Elder about his life, about his future, and he just gave him an old handkerchief. He was visibly disappointed. But what would you think this handkerchief meant? Tears! Indeed, the poor man had to face many woes and temptations in his life, and he shed a river of tears. So when the Elder said he wanted to give me something, I thanked him and thought: “I wonder what it’ll be.”

He had trouble getting up (this was in the last years of his life), and he started pulling out drawers, looking for something fitting for me.

(continued next issue)

will suffer a great fall. "Rich men turned poor and went hungry" (Psalm 33:11), and the Apostle Paul warns us: "Those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition" (1 Tim. 6:9).

But the great misery of the rich in the parable would come quickly. While he wondered where he would store his crop, and dreamed of living high for many years, he heard the voice from Heaven say to him, "Fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?" (verse 20). By acting in this way, the rich person loses both his earthly goods and the treasure of Heaven. This treasure is denied because the rich person, due to their greed, was not able to do the good works needed to get it.

Maybe the rich would ask: "Why am I dying now? What did I do wrong? There was no stealing here, and this is what I have earned. It's mine!"

Here we see the great mistake, both of the rich in the parable and of every person of wealth. They are under the illusion that the riches they possess are for them alone. They do not understand that God has given them this to share it. This goes back to the teaching of St. Basil the Great: You are a keeper of your fellow human beings. Do not think that all this was given to you for yourself only...For all this, you will be asked directly....Do you think that this is unfair, with so much given to you, and you give nothing to others?

The extra food you keep belongs to the person who is hungry. The clothes you have filling your closet are for the naked. The money you get and hide away is for the one who needs it. So much inequality, and so many people in need who could be helped. In God's Wisdom, he allows rich people their wealth to benefit not just them, but all people. If everyone just kept what they needed, and gave away the rest, there would be no poor in the world.

My brothers and sisters in Christ, let us apply the teaching of the Apostle Paul: "Having food and clothing, with these we shall be content (1 Timothy 6:8). Let us make sure that we are rich in what will earn us our permanent riches in Heaven. Amen.

When we say 'deification', we mean the elevation of a

person beyond the natural state and to similarity to God, as far as this is possible. This is attainable because of the incarnation of God the Word and sanctification by the grace of the Holy Spirit.

Deification is the center and basis of Christian soteriology and is what we're destined for. Orthodox mysticism revolved around this in the past, continues to do so and will continue in the future. It was developed by our own Fathers who thereafter transmitted it, as a token of their good will, to the daughter Churches of the Slav peoples. Deification can't be described in human terms. The Lord revealed a pale image of it at his Transfiguration on Mount Tabor. The Lord's words that the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their father (Matt. 14, 43) are also an allusion to deification.

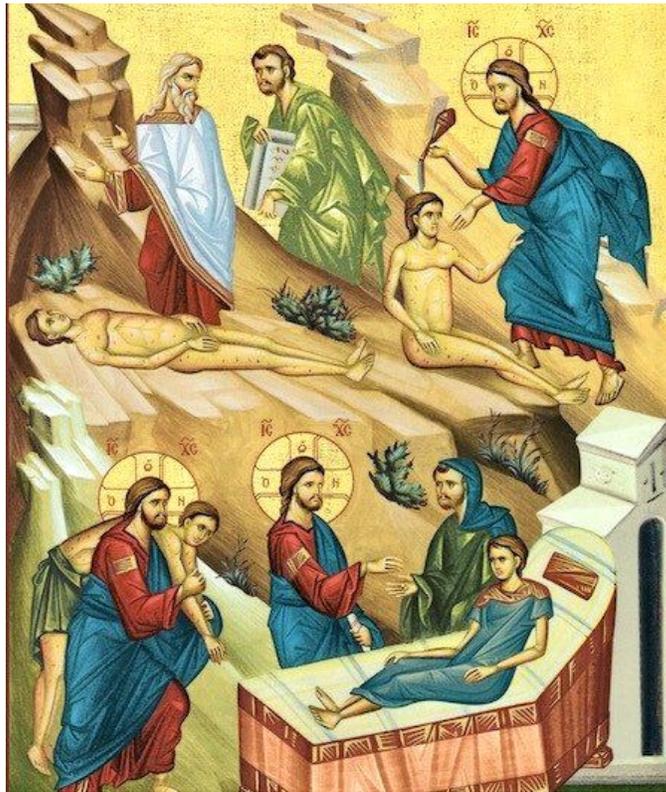
Some traces of deification were also borne by the Prophet Moses on his face when he descended from the peak of Sinai. As a result, the Israelites were unable to gaze upon him until he covered his face.

Many of our holy Fathers bore the grace of deification, as we can see from their *Lives*, such as, for example, Abba Pambo, Abba Sisoë, Saint Symeon the New Theologian, Saint Seraphim of Sarov and all the others who by Christ's grace ascended the ladder of sanctity.

This divine radiance which shone from the body of the deified saints was the divine state which permeated them and which illumines and sanctifies the whole psychosomatic being of a person. All the psychosomatic members of such people are sanctified and share in the

incorruption and fragrance of holiness. Meanwhile their faces shine like the sun, though this brightness is not perceptible to those around, unless divine grace permits it to show, for the edification of the faithful. It's this grace that sanctifies their bones, their garments and whatever else they made use of, as we read in their *Lives*. Thus we see that even their 'handkerchiefs and aprons' (Acts 19, 12) worked miracles and effected cures.

In short, then, deification is the transfiguration of the human person, by divine grace, into their initial state of being 'in the image and likeness of God'. Made possible by the incarnation of God the Word, it's the adoption of a person on God's part, by grace. Deification is participation in divine glory and divine bliss to the extent that this is possible for human nature.



The Entrance of the Theotokos into the Temple

According to Holy Tradition, the Entry of the Most Holy Theotokos into the Temple took place in the following manner. The parents of the Virgin Mary, Saints Joachim and Anna, praying for an end to their childlessness, vowed that if a child were born to them, they would dedicate it to the service of God.

When the Most Holy Virgin reached the age of three, the holy parents decided to fulfill their vow. They gathered together their relatives and acquaintances, and dressed the All-Pure Virgin in Her finest clothes. Singing sacred songs and with lighted candles in their hands, virgins escorted Her to the Temple (Ps. 44/45:14-15).

There the High Priest and several priests met the handmaiden of God. In the Temple, fifteen high steps led to the sanctuary, which only the priests and High Priest could enter. (Because they recited a Psalm on each step, Psalms 119/120-133/134 are called "Psalms of Ascent.") The child Mary, so it seemed, could not make it up this stairway. But just as they placed Her on the first step, strengthened by the power of God, She quickly went up the remaining steps and ascended to the highest one. Then the High Priest, through inspiration from above, led the Most Holy Virgin into the Holy of Holies, where only the High Priest entered once a year to offer a purifying sacrifice of blood. Therefore, all those present in the Temple were astonished at this most unusual occurrence.

After entrusting their child to the Heavenly Father, Joachim and Anna returned home. The All-Holy Virgin remained in the quarters for virgins near the Temple. According to the testimony of Holy Scripture (Exodus 38; 1 Kings 1: 28; Luke 2: 37), and also the historian Josephus Flavius, there were many living quarters around the Temple, in which those who were dedicated to the service of God dwelt.

The earthly life of the Most Holy Theotokos from Her infancy until She was taken up to Heaven is shrouded in deep mystery. Her life at the Jerusalem Temple was also a secret. "If anyone were to ask me," said Saint Jerome, "how the Most Holy Virgin spent the time of Her youth, I would answer that that is known to God Him-

self and the Archangel Gabriel, Her constant guardian."

But there are accounts in Church Tradition, that during the All-Pure Virgin's stay at the Temple, She grew up in a community of pious virgins, diligently read the Holy Scripture, occupied Herself with handicrafts, prayed constantly, and grew in love for God. From ancient times, the Church has celebrated the Feast of the Entry of the Most Holy Theotokos into the Temple. Indications that the Feast was observed in the first centuries of Christianity are found in the traditions of Palestinian Christians, which say that the holy Empress Helen (May 21) built a church in honor of the Entry of the Most Holy Theotokos into the Temple.

Saint Gregory of Nyssa, in the fourth century, also mentions this Feast. In the eighth century Saints Germanus and Tarasius, Patriarchs of Constantinople, delivered sermons on the Feast of the Entry.

The Feast of the Entry of the Most Holy Theotokos into the Temple foretells God's blessing for the human race, the preaching of salvation, the promise of the coming of Christ.

The icon of the feast tells the story of Mary's entry into the Temple. The High Priest, Zacharias, is in his priestly robes standing on the step of the Temple. His arms are outstretched, ready to greet and receive the Virgin. Mary is shown as a small child, standing before Zacharias with her arms reaching up to him.

In some icons the young maidens who served as her escort are depicted standing

behind her. Also, we see her parents, Joachim and Anna, offering their child to God and His divine service. In the upper center portion of the icon, the Virgin is seated on the steps of the Holy of Holies. An angel is there, attending to the one chosen by God to bring the Savior into the world.

Troparion for the Feast

Today is the prelude of the good will of God, of the preaching of the salvation of mankind.

The Virgin appears in the temple of God, in anticipation proclaiming Christ to all.

Let us rejoice and sing to her:

"Rejoice, O Fulfillment of the Creator's dispensation."

