

A Voice in the Wilderness

The Newsletter of St. George Orthodox Christian Church

Rev. Matthew P. Binkewicz, Pastor

Glory be to Jesus Christ! Glory be Forever!



Volume 8 Issue 389

25th Sunday after Pentecost—Christ heals 10 Lepers

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Our generation is not alone in finding it difficult to appreciate the spiritual significance of the human body. Across the centuries, an abiding temptation for many is to believe that physical things simply cannot become holy. Of course, that perspective often serves as an excuse to justify living as we please in daily life while giving God only our thoughts and feelings. Whatever such a spiritual path

may be, it is not the genuine Christian faith and lacks the power to heal us as the whole persons God created us to be.

Today's gospel passage describes our Lord healing ten men who suffered from the dreaded disease of leprosy. Christ's healing ministry showed that His salvation encompasses every dimension of the human being: body, soul, and spirit. He demonstrated how His gracious love restores broken, weak people to their dignity in the image and likeness of God. Were our bodies spiritually irrelevant, intrinsically evil, or otherwise not integral dimensions of who we are, the Savior would surely not have devoted Himself to blessing the sick.

But since we are creatures of flesh and blood in a world of death and decay, He restored people to health as an
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**** 25th Sunday after Pentecost ****

*** St. Patapius of Egypt ***

Epistle: Ephesians 4: 1-6

Gospel: Luke 17: 11-19

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.*

The Icon of the Entry of the Theotokos, Pt. 2, by Hierodeacon Philaret

The Mother of God is depicted with normal features, that is to say there's nothing of the child about her except for the size of her body. This is deliberate. The Orthodox iconographer wants to distance us from the letter of the narrative, in which Our Lady is a three-year-old child, so that we can see her spirit, her ecclesiastical dimension.

Our Lady is the woman who bore God, she's the Mother of God. This is why the hymnographer

writes: 'Let us praise in hymns the Mother chosen by God, a child in nature yet beyond nature' (troparion at Matins for the feast).

Our Lady is portrayed as a mature woman, with her typical head-covering, as we see her in other icons. The hymnographer does the same with the virgins' candles. The lighted candles aren't there to prevent the three-year-old child from returning home, as the apocryphal tradition would have it, but to

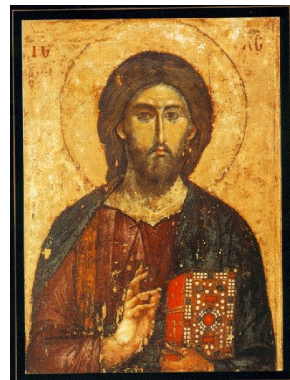
point to the notional candle, Our Lady, and proclaim in advance the ineffable splendor of the future, that is Christ who would be born of her and would shine light on the people dwelling in the darkness of sin.

In many icons Our Lady is depicted, behind Zechariah, as sitting on a throne with three steps, awaiting the food brought to her by the Archangel Gabriel. In this icon, we should see the 'Bread of Life' which
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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.





Troparion to St. George

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
for our souls
salvation.

News and Notes

We welcome all who are worshipping with us today and invite you down to the church hall for our social hour.

Pray without ceasing (1 Thess. 5.17)

We ask that you keep the following in your prayers: Esther, Clement John, Mother Onufria, Olga, Lillian, Meg, Larissa, Stephen, Louise, Marcia, George, Lorraine, Peg, Christopher, Jackie, Karoline, Evan, Ryan, Kathleen, Sandy, Andrea, Samuel, Anatoly, Linda, Alexey, Eric, Abraham, Susan, Jenny, Sally Lou, Bob, Catherine, the homeless, the hungry, victims of abuse and violence, and those persecuted for their faith in Christ.

Words of wisdom from the Elders

Christian renunciation of the world does not mean renouncing our love for it; on the contrary, it is a true affirmation of love for it. Quite consciously I say "love for the world," although if I used the words "love for people" I would void any seeming conflict with the words of the Apostle Paul, "Do not love the world." People remember this quotation without really un-

derstanding it, yet there is another text that they neither remember nor understand, "God so loved the world..." God loved, but we do not and thus we do not want to take part in what is said further, "God so loved the world that he gave His only Son" (John 3: 16).

We condemn the world and are quite sure of our right to judge it, though in the very same Gospel passage we find the words, "God sent the Son into the world not to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved." Without love, how can we give ourselves up for people? Only the holiness of love can ascend to Golgotha.

Not to love the world means, first of all, not to love one's darkness, sinfulness, and self and to realize that I am in this dark and unloving world.

(From Light in the Darkness, by Sergei Fudel, p. 61)



The Entry of the Theotokos, (continued from p. 1)

God gives His children, encouraging and preparing them to be brought into the True Life, by trampling down their will. More rarely, we see angels conversing with the Mother of God, as in the icon by Kontonis in the Benaki Museum.

In the person of the Mother of God, the transition from the Old Testament to the New is already complete. She's in the temple, and will soon herself become the Temple of the Son and Word of God. She's a more holy Temple than the one in Jerusalem and the greatest of all Temples, that is, she is that which all of us have as our objective to become, given the premises created by the Resurrection and by the Descent of the Holy Spirit.

The Most Holy Theotokos as The Temple of God

If one were to attempt to describe the role and purpose of the Church in a single phrase, one might say that: 'The aim of the Church is to manifest God to people'. In order to achieve this goal, the Church uses theology,

which expresses the faith of the Church in two ways: either through words or through images.

However, the power of words and images, when attempting to reveal God, are necessarily limited and so, if we're to understand their content



properly, we have to approach them with great care and always to be aware of the requirements this approach implies. A typical example of the use of images, of icons, to express the faith of the Church is the feast we

celebrate today, the Entry of the Mother of God.

The historical foundation for this feast lies in the Byzantine period. In Jerusalem, on the site previously occupied by the temple of Solomon, Emperor Justinian built a large basilica in honor of Our Most Holy Lady. The church was inaugurated on 20 November and, every year, a magnificent feast-day was celebrated on November 21.

At the end of the 7th or beginning of the 8th centuries, this feast came to be associated with an ancient Christian legend, according to which Our Lady, at the age of three, was dedicated by her parents to the temple of God, which at that time stood on the precise spot chosen for the new church. This is why the reading from the Epistle to the Hebrews at today's feast refers to the description of the temple in Jerusalem. This linkage between the temple in Jerusalem and a feast of Our Lady conceals a most profound symbolism.

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enacted icon of His gracious purposes for us all. For He did not come merely to teach or even to forgive, but to restore and fulfill us as sons and daughters who truly share in His eternal life. He came to heal us in every way possible.

Perhaps we have heard stories of the Lord's healing mercy so many times that we take them for granted. Today's particular account has a couple of details that should focus our attention. First, the men whom Christ healed had leprosy, a dreaded disease that separated its victims from anyone who did not have it. Notice that the men stood at a distance when they called out for healing, for they were considered dangerously unclean.

Here we have a sign of how easily our sins can separate us from others, including those we love the most in this life. We may become overwhelmed with guilt and shame to the point that we would rather withdraw from relationships than confront the painful truth of how we have harmed them.

Unless we embrace the healing of Christ, the causes of our separation from one another will simply fester and weaken all concerned. If He could cleanse people of leprosy and restore them to a normal life in first-century Palestine, we must

not place limits on how He can heal us and our broken relationships today. For that to happen, we must respond to Him with the humble faith of the Samaritan leper.

This is the second noteworthy detail: The only one of the lepers who returned to thank Christ for healing him was a hated Samaritan, considered a foreigner and a heretic by the Jews. After the man fell down before Him in gratitude, the Lord said, "Rise and go your way; your faith has made you well." This shocking detail reminds us that the Savior's therapeutic ministry extended to those very much on the margins of society, to those outside the class of people considered neighbors. Because He came to bring all people and the entire creation into the blessedness of the Kingdom of God, however, Christ's mercy for suffering humanity extended also to

him.

The Samaritan's physical and social disability were signs of his need for healing and restoration that he could not give himself. Out of deep gratitude for this completely unexpected and shocking blessing, the Samaritan alone returned to give thanks. Consequently, he was healed that day in a way that extended beyond the merely physical. His example should remind us of the importance of expressing gratitude to the Lord for His mercy and of extending that same mercy to the suffering people we are tempted to view as strangers and enemies.

Saint Paul knew that even a great apostle received the healing of Christ like an earthen vessel, like a container made of clay. The great "transcendent power belongs to

God and not to us," for we are weak in so many ways. While we live we are always being given up to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus may be manifested in our mortal flesh." Through his many sufferings as an apostle, Saint Paul became a living icon of the Savior's victory over corruption in all its forms, including the grave.

Since we are earthen vessels, we are weak and unworthy of the promise of healing that is ours in Jesus Christ. That is why we must attend to how we are offering ourselves to Him practically

so that we may gain the strength to turn away from everything that hinders us from sharing in His life as fully as possible. We cannot separate our bodies from our souls; and in light of our Lord's birth and baptism, the physical dimensions of life certainly do not have to separate us from Him.

Recall that through His healing of people suffering with leprosy, a Samaritan became an example of faith and gratitude. Through the offering of the Eucharist, bread and wine become the Body and Blood of Christ. The Savior comes to heal us all in every dimension of our life as embodied persons who bear the divine image and likeness. Remembering that we are flesh and blood, let us fall down before Him in thanks as we accept this great blessing for the healing of every dimension of our humanity: body, soul, and spirit.



Photos of Syrian Hill from the Snow Storm Dec 1, 2019

