

A Voice in the Wilderness

The Newsletter of St. George Orthodox Christian Church



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Glory be to Jesus Christ! Glory be Forever!



Volume 9 Issue 419

4th Sunday after Pentecost-Christ heals the Centurion's Servant

Sunday, July 5, 2020



Today's Gospel illustrates Our Lord's outreach to all the world-not merely the Jewish people. But before we look more closely at the centurion in today's reading, let us remember that a centurion was a Roman soldier who had 100 other soldiers under his charge. He was skilled in use of all types of weaponry and exercised

strong leadership and discipline. His modern-day equivalent would probably be a lieutenant colonel of the U.S. Army or Marines. Interestingly, nearly every centurion mentioned in the New Testament was a man of honor.

There was the centurion at the Cross who recognized Jesus as the Son of God (Mt.27:54; Mk.15:39). There was Cornelius, the centurion who was the first Gentile convert to the Church (Acts 10:1-22). There was the centurion who rescued St. Paul from the rioting mob (Acts 24:23). There was the centurion who was with St. Paul on his last journey to Rom who treated him with every courtesy (Acts 27:1-43).

And that brings us to today's centurion, who came to Jesus asking Him to heal his ailing servant. This centurion exemplifies four essential qualities that all Christians should possess. The
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***4th Sunday after Pentecost ***

* St. Sergius of Radonezh *

Epistle: Romans 6: 18-23

Gospel: Matthew 8: 5-13

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 Brief Guide to the Psalms-Part 2

One well-known commentary is the one of St. John Chrysostom that generally starts from a historical perspective, attempting to set each psalm in its original context.

The Psalms are traditionally ascribed to King David but it is clear that this tradition, like the name of the book, was something true of a kernel of Psalms, which was cast upon all. That was a common approach to collections of writings in the ancient world. Refer-

ences to Babylon and other late historical settings show that the collection of Psalms grew in Ancient Israel long after King David, as God's inspiration continued to work.

Historically, the Psalms reflect the religion and the national and individual experience of Old Testament Israel and the Jews. The Psalter was used for hundreds of years in this context during worship in the Temple and synagogues before Christ. There are

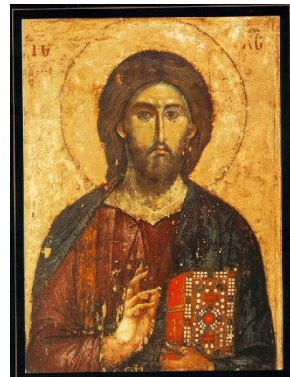
references to the beauty of God's Law given by Moses, to God's deliverance from Egypt and later from the captivity in Babylon and to a longing for Jerusalem (Zion), to specific events relating to the monarchy of Israel, to the sacrificial system, to musical instruments in use among the people and to the warfare of the nation.

There are names of specific Old Testament individuals such as King David, King Saul, Absalom
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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, Evan, Ryan, Kathleen, Sandy, Samuel, Anatoly, Alexey, Abraham, Susan, Jenny, Deb, Dan, Bob, Catherine, Skip, Doug, Heidi, Bonnalee, Vicky, Corella, Gail, Mike, the homeless, the hungry, victims of abuse and violence, & those persecuted for their faith in Christ.

Words on Prayer

Often we ask for some things, not being ready for them: someone wants a family, not considering the measure of their readiness for this, someone is eager for a new job, because they don't appreciate the old one, meanwhile being not much in a hurry to work and change, and someone asks for other earthly goods, not realizing that they will ruin him or crush him with their load.

The right moment should come – the readiness of one's soul for such a gift. The Lord is the only one Who knows when this hour will come. He is preparing us for this.

One of the main prayers of believers, which protects us in any difficult circumstances, is the angelic prayer, or the Trisagion: "Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal, have mercy on us."

There are no specific requests in this prayer, but there is an appeal to the three Persons of the Holy Trinity at once as one – incomprehensible, beautiful and magnificent. And this is an amazing characteristic of this prayer.

"Holy God" is an expression of our worship of the Creator as one God, we turn to the first Person of the Holy Trinity – God the Father; "Holy Mighty" – the most powerful, almighty – we call God the Son, who conquered death; "Holy Immortal" – never dying, eternal – we glorify God the Holy Spirit, who breathed life into every living creature, our infinite mastermind. The prayer is read three times in honor of the Three Persons of the Holy Trinity.

A Brief Guide to the Psalms (cont'd from p. 1)

and Cush the the Benjamite. There are geographical references to the Holy Land with references such as the wilderness of Judah, Mount Hermon, Mount Tabor, and Mount Zion.

Therefore in order to fully appreciate the Psalms, it is useful to understand all the Old Testament with its history and geography as the stage for these writings. Also, because the Psalms reflect Old Testament revelation and spirituality, they contain requests of God that would not be made by God's people after Christ's revelation of the true spirit behind the Old Testament in Matthew 5 of the New Testament.

One such request, for example, is to destroy the persecuting enemies of the supplicant together with their children. The Psalms show a growth of Israel religion, under God's progressive revelation, that reaches great spiritual heights. Yet, even at their height they do not attain the spiritual level of the New Testament revelation of Christ and thus required a proper placement in the Church.

Since the Church adopted the Psalms as the main prayers of the Church, the application and interpretation of the Psalms for the Church are based on typology to the spiritual



life of the Christian and the Church. The enemies described in the Psalms are a type of the demons and the spiritual enemies of the Christian.

The original requests for the defeat of national and personal enemies be-

comes requests for the defeat of evil spiritual forces besetting the Christian. The references to burnt offerings and other physical sacrifices become, in type, a references to the spiritual sacrifices of the Christian and the ultimate sacrifice of Christ as given in the Eucharist. The longings for Jerusalem and Zion become longings for the Kingdom of God. The nation of Israel typifies the expanded Israel of God – the Church . King David with God as his Father is a type of the Messiah, the only Begotten Son and King. Thus, in the Church, the Psalms are transformed and "baptized" to the advanced spiritual life of the Christian.

The Psalms were written with great poetic skill, some of which comes across in translation. Lost in the translation is the rhythmic Hebrew poetry that emphasizes stressed syllables rather than words and lands on the ear more like the semi-regular waves on the ocean beach, as would have been chanted by Jesus.

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Theologian Fr. Anthony Coniaris enumerates them as faith, humility, love and obedience.

First, the centurion's is an example of great faith in God. Only twice in the Gospels did Jesus marvel at something. One was the unbelief of the people of Nazareth (Mk.6:6) and the other was the faith of the centurion in today's gospel. *'When Jesus heard it, He marveled, and said to those who followed, 'Assuredly, I say to you, I have not found such great faith, not even in Israel!'* (Mt.8:10). The centurion's faith was so great, when Jesus said He would come to his house, the centurion responded, *'But only speak a word, and my servant will be healed'* (Mt.8:8).

Second, the centurion exemplifies humility. Again, when Jesus said He would come to his home to heal his servant, the centurion said, *'Lord, I am not worthy that You should come under my roof'* (Mt.8:8). St. Augustine, commenting on this passage said, *"By viewing himself as unworthy, he showed himself worthy for Christ to come not merely into his house but also into his heart."* Fr. Coniaris points out that humility builds faith while pride kills faith. Pride not only fails to find God, but pride does not even desire to find Him. Humility, on the other hand, empties the inner person of all ego so that God may come and find space to make His home within.

Third, the centurion is a model of love. A man in charge of 100 Roman soldiers had many more important concerns than the health of one slave. However, the centurion does not refer to him as a slave but as his boy or his son. The same story is recorded in the Gospel of Luke (7:1-10) and in it says, *'So when he heard about Jesus, he sent elders of the Jews to Him, pleading with Him to come and heal his servant. And when they came to Jesus, they begged Him earnestly, saying that the one for whom He should do this was deserving, for he loves our nation, and has built us a synagogue (vv.3-5).*

Fourth, the centurion models obedience. He says to Jesus *'For I also am a man under authority, having soldiers under me. And I say to this one, Go, and he goes; and to another, Come, and he comes; and to my servant, Do this, and he does it'* (Mt.8:9). The unity and success of any army is built on the obedience of each soldier to his superior. Thus, because the centurion believes that

Jesus is Lord, he knows well that His command should be obeyed instantly. *'But only speak a word, and my servant will be healed'* (Mt.8:8).

As we conclude today, let us remember that children learn from their fathers, especially from their deeds more than their words. We who serve as fathers, grandfathers, godfathers, spiritual fathers and all types of other fathers, should look to the centurion of today's gospel and ask: When my children place their faith and trust in me, do I come through for them or do I disappoint them? Do I demonstrate to my children deep faith and trust in God by praying and worshipping with them? Do I show my children humility through service to others especially those in need? Or do I pridefully scrutinize and judge others? Do I love my children with self-sacrificial agape setting aside all other concerns when they need me? Do I demand obedience with a cold, despotic rule or do I show obedience when relating to those in authority over me?

Jesus told the centurion that as he believed, it would be done and thus his slave was healed that very hour (Mt.8:13). Fathers, our lived faith, humility, love and obedience will no doubt help to bring healing into our own children's lives. However, if we fail in attaining these important virtues, then our children will look elsewhere for a father and what will they find? Amen!

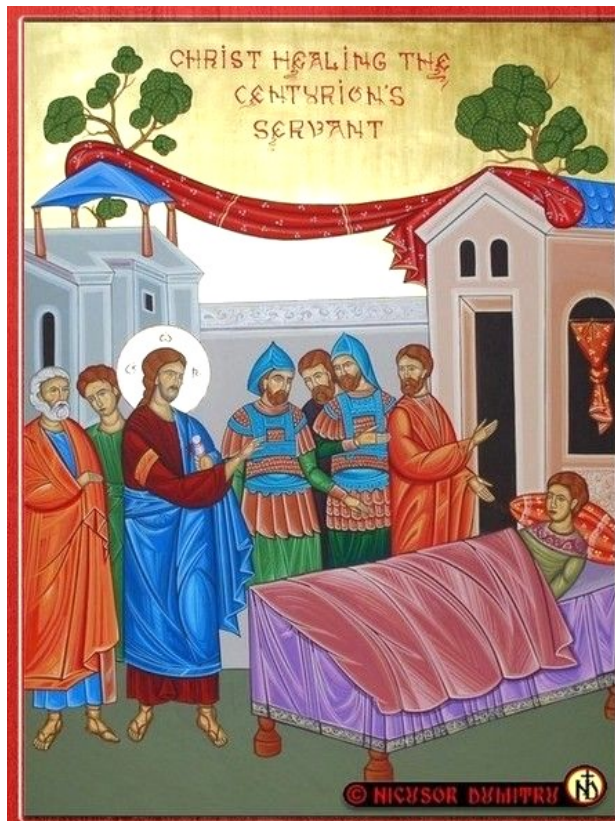
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"If a person puts mammon in the first place and God in the second, then such a person, although he may be rich, will be unhappy. Because it is not wealth that brings happiness to a person, but God," said Metropolitan Onuphry of Kiev.

The treasures of this world and even health cannot bring happiness without God, because they are perishable, the metropolitan explained.

"Both health and wealth pass, only the Eternal God remains, Who created us in His image and likeness and wants us to be partakers of eternal life and bliss, which one can find only in God. The eternal life is nowhere else and the soul of a person – even of the one who does not recognize God – is striving for this," said the Archpastor.

A person's soul cannot find rest until it meets God. *"If a person has not found God or is not looking for Him, he is unhappy, his soul grieves and finds no rest. In order to find peace, one should join the Source of Peace. This Source is God,"*



The Experience of the Holy Spirit-an interview with Archimandrite Zacharias (part 2)

It is as members of the Church that we become strong and perfect, for we are given to comprehend 'what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height of the love of Christ' only together with all the Saints (cf. Eph. 3:18). This is how God ordained all things. Our perfection within the Body of the Church does not lie in how crafty we are, nor in our ability to snatch one gift or another, but in humbling ourselves so that we may come to know that we are 'members of one another' and partakers of the gifts of all the Saints.

Then, we become universal, as Christ is universal, for through the communion into which He leads us, the Holy Spirit grants us the enlargement of the New Adam, of Christ, and makes us human beings with an universal heart that embraces the whole humanity. This is the greatness of Christianity which we find in the Church. God has never given all His gifts to only one person, no matter how great that person may be, whether he is called Peter or Paul or Maximus or Basil the Great. He gave each one a particular gift so that we may be members of one another and keep a humble spirit. Father Sophrony told me one day: 'Those who are regenerated by the Spirit have one competition, who will humble himself more in front of the other.'

How do we experience the Holy Spirit in our life? The Holy Spirit perfects man as a hypostasis because He enlarges the heart to embrace every human being from Adam till the Second Coming, leading man to hypostatic prayer for the whole world. The Holy Spirit enlarges the heart to be able to accommodate grace and acquire compassion for the 'little ones' of our brethren (Matt. 18:10). This enlargement enables us to call upon the Name of Christ in the Holy Spirit. Through the invocation of the Name of Christ, we attract the Holy Spirit, Who depicts the image of Christ and builds the temple of God in our heart. The Apostle says that 'no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost' (1 Cor. 12:3). Therefore, when we say 'Lord, Jesus Christ' 'from a pure heart' (2 Tim. 2:22), with humility and attention, we have Pentecost.

The Holy Spirit reminds us of the words of Christ and opens our understanding to their meaning; He inspires us to utter perfect words, as Saint Silouan says, and enables us to become prophetic in the Liturgy by perfecting this exchange of lives through the Holy Spirit, for it is the Ho-

ly Spirit that sanctifies the Gifts and transforms them into the Body and Blood of Christ. All these means, the Name of Christ, the word of God and the mystery of the Holy Eucharist through the enlargement of the heart because of compassion for the 'little ones' witness to the presence of the Holy Spirit in the life of the Christian and they all become one life in the heart of man, as Saint Sophrony says.

Question: We have become more familiar with the Person of Christ in our life. Can we develop a similar relationship with the Holy Spirit?

Answer: There was a period when I persistently thought: 'Why should I pray only to Christ? I want to feel the proximity of the Father as well.' So I started to pray with great desire to the Heavenly Father, but after a few

minutes I found myself praying to the Son, because Who is the Father? He Who 'so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life' (John 3:16). You start praying to the Father and without realizing it, you end up praying to the Son. We continually know the Father from the words of the Son, and it is not even necessary to think of having a special relationship with the Father, for the Father is well-pleased for us to become the disciples of His Son, and when we become like unto His image, the Son will deliver us as children unto the Father for all eternity. It is the same with the Holy Spirit: we begin to pray to the Holy Spirit and without realising it, our prayer turns again to Christ, because it is He Who sends the Holy Spirit to us.

Often when we pray to the Father, we have the same energy in prayer as when we pray to the Lord. However, the Lord says: 'No one comes to the Father but by me' (John 14:6). No one receives the Holy Spirit but through His gift, because He is the One Who ascended on high, led captivity captive and gave the gifts of the Holy Spirit to men (cf. Eph. 4:8). Christ said, 'Unless I go, the other Comforter will not come' (John 16:7), because He had to go and present Himself before God after having accomplished the work of salvation, so that the Father may be pleased to send the gifts of the Holy Spirit upon earth. The more the grace of the Lord works in us, the more grateful we become to the Holy Spirit as well. 'According to the gift of Thy Christ,' as we say in the Presanctified Liturgy, and according to the increase of the gifts in the soul, we begin to have a communion with the Holy Spirit, too.

