

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 437

22nd Sunday after Pentecost—Jesus heals the Demoniacs

Sunday, November 8, 2020



In today's Gospel reading, we have two miracles. The woman with the flow of blood is healed, and the daughter of Jairus is raised from the dead. But in these two quite different and humanly speaking unrelated miracles, we have an identical message from Christ. "Your faith has made you

well," He tells the woman with the flow of blood. "Only believe, and she will be made well," He tells the family of the departed girl.

The Church today, and in fact St. Luke in the way he's chosen to relay these two miracles in his Gospel, talk to us about faith. What does it mean to have faith in God? To believe in God? The woman with the flow of blood just reaches out to touch the hem of Christ's garment. She doesn't go to Him directly, like Jairus does, and ask for healing. She comes from the side, trying to remain hidden, but having the faith that just touching the Lord will bring her healing. And Christ calls her out of the crowd not because He doesn't know who she is—He's God, and He knows what's just happened. And He doesn't call her out of the crowd for her sake—she has what
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***22nd Sunday after Pentecost ***

* Synaxis of the Holy Archangels *

Epistle: Galatians 6: 11-18

Gospel: Luke 8: 41-56

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.*

Holiness and our life in the World, by George Manolis

The times we live in are often said to be a secularized era, spiritually devoid of the presence of God. This is not because God is absent, but because people leave Him out of their life, often, alas, deliberately.

This is because, when we choose to tread the path against God rather than to walk alongside Him, His presence in our life becomes a rebuke. As a result, we aren't able to rest in the arms of God, but, like a spoiled child, we try to wrestle

out of them in order to show that we don't need Him, because His love is deemed to be a shackle and the opposite of the license which denial of Him brings.

Even though everything around us declares and bears witness to Christ, we prefer to stop our ears, turn away our eyes and, in the end, choose a life bereft of God's presence. This is because sin is presented initially as being sweet, as satisfying our ego, but thereafter it leaves us empty and

alone, cut off from God and our neighbor.

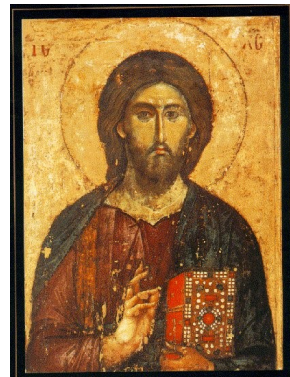
On the other hand, however, God's presence in our life is difficult, but not unattainable. It calls upon us to rein in our ego, to prioritize the group as a whole in a society of persons where individuals strive not to satisfy their egotism but to contribute to the good of others, even if this requires sacrifice itself in order to succeed.

People are weak, not by nature but because of
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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. Because of COVID-19, our social hour has been canceled until we receive further instructions from the Department of Health.

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, Evan, Ryan, Kathleen, Sandy, Samuel, Anatoly, Alexey, Abraham, Susan, Jenny, Deb, Dan, Bob, Catherine, Skip, Doug, Heidi, Bonnalee, Vicky, Corella, Gail, Mike, Ron, Renee, the homeless, the hungry, victims of abuse and violence, & those persecuted for their faith in Christ.

Fear and our Future

Fear threatens to overwhelm us and endangers to divide us more and more from one another. It jeopardizes our sense of community and love for one another, leading us to hunker down into our self-made shelters. We keep away from the other, whom we fear. We separate ourselves

from those whom we feel are different, and thus dangerous.

Yet, fear is not from God! When we allow fear to control us, we are betraying our faith in the Almighty. St. John tells us in Holy Scripture, "Perfect love casts out fear." So, why do we allow fear to eclipse love in our hearts.

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks offer us these words of wisdom. "A nation is strong when it cares for the weak. It becomes rich when it cares for the poor. It becomes invulnerable when it cares for the vulnerable. That is what makes great nations... Thus, I challenge you to do a search and replace operation on the text of your mind. Whenever you encounter the word "self" substitute the word "other." Self-help becomes other-help. Self-esteem becomes other-esteem. And if we do that, we will begin to feel the power of one the most moving sentences of all religious literature – "Yeah I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil. For you are with me." We can face the future without any fear so long as we won't face it alone." God is with all of us.

The Fear of God versus Panic, cont'd from p. 1)

their fractured relationship with God and their leaning towards sin after the Fall, and they need models capable of waking them up and helping them on the path towards perfection in Christ.

These days we're inundated with images of models who aren't worth imitating and would actually be better avoided. Unfortunately, they're deliberately promoted on all sides, because they produce docile creatures, obedient people who are in thrall to the passions. It's rare to come across models who promote the gentle nobility of antiquity. Even rarer are models who lead us to the transcendence and perfection of ourselves within the Church of Christ, that is, holiness; models who can bring us towards perfection, to our completion in Christ.

In an age which is spiritually empty, if not dead, the words of Saint Peter, 'Become holy', continue to ring out, splitting the muted air and disturbing the deathly quiet of the modern world. The Church's mission in the world is to unveil the Gospel, to tell

the world of God's love for us and ours for Him. It interacts with people in every era, putting forward its own proposal. Yesterday, today and to-



morrow, the Church shines the spotlight on its own models of daily witness to Christ, models full of love for and interest in others, models who sacrifice themselves for the love of Christ and of others.

Every day it reminds us of the saints who were interested in those who were suffering, who aided those who were starving, who prayed for those who were untimely lost, who strove for God's justice, who brought joy to the sick, who shared the pain of others in order to assuage their sorrows, who became companions on the path of others. These are models who show that another way of life is feasible, other than that promoted by society. That is the life in Christ, which renews us. It doesn't merely restore us to our state before the Fall, but even transcends that paradise, making us into Christ by our deification through Grace.

Where are we to find such models today? All you need to do is to turn your eyes to the walls of a church or look through the daily Lives of the Saints and you'll see people as mortal as you are who saw sin, tasted it in the darkness, but turned away when they saw and tasted the Light. They then worked hard to maintain the

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(Homily on Christ performing 2 miracles, cont'd from p.1)

she's come for. She doesn't want anything else; she doesn't want to be known or recognized; she had only come to see the Lord.

Christ calls her out of the crowd so that her faith could serve as an example. So that people could see that He had come for all—not just for leaders like Jairus, whose house He was traveling to at that very moment. Christ came to bring healing for all. And what did He ask in return? Nothing. Only that we believe. When Christ comes to Jairus' home, He handles the situation a little differently. Jairus' daughter is no longer sick, and in need of healing. She's died while Christ was on the way to see her. But this time He sends everyone away. The only people who get to witness the miracle are three of the disciples, and the father and mother of the young girl. And after the young

maiden has been resurrected by Christ—a miracle far more impressive in human terms than simply healing an ill woman—Christ tells them to tell no one. He chose to reveal the faith of the woman who was healed to everyone around, but the faith of the family whose daughter was raised from the dead, He chooses to keep silent.

Now, we could talk about why this was historically (Christ didn't want to be confused for merely a traveling miracle worker), but a far more important question is what message is being sent by Christ in the Gospel about the nature of faith in Him. What does it mean to have faith in God? We know from Christ's own words that believing in God is not simply an intellectual exercise. Christ, in the Gospel this morning, uses the words "faith" and "believe" in the same way, so we'll use them as synonyms this morning. We're not going to talk about differences, Christ uses them to mean the same thing. We know that faith in God is not simply the admission that God exists.

As St. James writes in his Epistle, "the demons believe in God and tremble." To think that God is real, or to think that everything we read in the Bible and the Fathers is true, is not what Jesus means by faith in Him. So what is faith in God? What is the faith that Christ is referring to in the Gospel reading this morning, the faith of those who are healed? As we've already said, faith is more than simply believing that God is real, and that the Bible is true. But these things are necessary. The first step toward true faith is, in fact, the recognition of the reality of God, and our need of Christ as our Savior. And



even this first step is a gift from God. But then something must happen with this "head knowledge" in order for us to be transformed, and truly have faith in God. When we have faith in God, our knowledge leads us, by the grace of God, to the point of giving ourselves to God. Of learning to love God, and to do the things He commanded us to do in Christ.

If we believe that the words of the Scriptures are true, then our lives will be transformed by those words. And this transformation is the product of a growing faith. We'll begin to strive to do the things Christ calls us to do, and we'll begin to seek to know God and to give our lives over to Him more fully every day. This is what the people in the Gospel reading today were doing. They were relying on Christ to fulfill their every need. They

were coming to Him, seeing in Him the source of all life and healing, and they were coming to bow down and worship Him. Their faith is in their actions. If they had just sat at home and thought, "I believe Christ could do this," but then if they didn't make any move, nothing would have happened. And the same is true in our lives.

Our faith in God is a willful decision to do the things of Christ. "Faith without works is dead," St. James wrote. If we claim to have faith, but we don't try to live according to Christ, if we don't try to follow the commandments of God, then we don't have faith.

Faith's not an emotion, and it's not just a cognitive acceptance of fact. Faith in Christ is a life dedicated to doing the will of God. The woman with the flow of blood doesn't just leave from the place of her healing and return to normal life. She goes home and tells people what has happened. In an early history of the Christian Church (by Eusebius), the historian records that the woman with the flow of blood went home and had a statue built as a memorial of her healing. A statue of her reaching out and touching the hem of Christ's robe. She is remembered as an Apostle in the Church—she saw Christ, she touched Him, and the rest of her life was dedicated to sharing the Truth of Jesus Christ with those around her.

In fact, several of the saints write that if we struggle to believe in God, then live like a Christian, and it won't take long before you not only accept God as real, but you'll even have the faith in Christ that so many people are searching for. When Christ performs miracles, He

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Homily on the 2 Miracles, (cont'd p.3)

only asks for faith. In fact, He preaches that we'll be saved by our faith in Him. But this saving and transforming faith is a life wholly given to Christ. In the Orthodox Church, there is no dichotomy between faith and works. If we have faith, then Christ tells us we will have works. Many of our Saints, including modern people like St. Silouan of Mt. Athos, make the point that the teachings of Christ are no different than the life of God. This is why True Faith lies in doing the will of God, following the commandments of Christ.

The teachings of Christ are not simply dictates—they reveal the very life of God. Christ is God, and all He says flows from the very life of God. His teachings don't just make good people; they form us in the image of God. Loving neighbors and enemies isn't just a good thing to do—it's what God does. If we truly believe what we profess we believe, then our every day and night will be given to the struggle to become more and more like our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. The question we have to ask ourselves each and every day is—are we living faith in Christ, or do our lives profess another as lord? And if we find ourselves falling short in fulfilling the things of God, let us offer repentance, and take up our Cross to follow Him in faith and love. Glory to Jesus Christ!

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(Holiness and life, cont'd p.2) the light of Christ alive and burning within themselves and were then able to pass it on to others.

Certain other events made me think recently about the phrase from Herodotus regarding what it is that makes a nation. The father of history says it is having the same blood, the same language, the same religion and the same patterns of behavior. Perhaps this is what human society needs today: to redefine the purpose of our existence, but this time giving it a new content. 'The same blood' means the blood of Christ, of which we become communicants; 'the same language' is the language of the Gospel; 'the same religion' is the Church of Christ; and 'the same patterns of behavior' is life in Christ.

Through its sacramental life, the Church offers us the way and the means of salvation and participation in the life of God through Grace. The experience of the saints is testimony to the salvation of humankind, renewing our

Holiness and Life

life and affecting it directly and definitively through our membership of the Church and of the society in which we live.

The saints are proof that God manifests Himself to us, that we're transformed by our communion with God and that this affects every facet of our life. Living and manifesting the life in Christ, the communion of the Holy Spirit, the saints provide us with criteria for living, by which we can tell truth from deception, the important from the insignificant. In this way, they help us to pass through 'the shadow of death' without fear.

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Why the Cross? By Metropolitan Anthony of Zahle

"Worthy is the Lamb who was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom, and strength and honor and glory and blessing!" (Revelation 5:12)

Our God came to us humbly, knowing that He would be slaughtered for our sins. He came knowing that we would crucify Him. Nevertheless, He did not refuse to die for us because He loves us. "Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name" (Philippians 2:9).

God, who is glorified in Himself, was brought low to the point of death, the death of the cross, so the cross became the throne of His glory. God does not need us to glorify Him: He is glorified in Himself. He does not need us to love because He is love lived in the unity of the Trinity.

It adds nothing and takes nothing away if we exist or do not exist. He does not need us for anything, but rather we need

Him in order to exist and despite that, He made Himself into a "beggar" out of love for us:

"Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me" (Revelation 3:20). The Lord knocks on the door of our heart. If we open it to Him, He enters and if we do not open it, He continues to stand and knock. This is infinite love and ultimate humility, God seeks us in His mad love, and what do we give in return? This is the cross in God's heart, the lamb slaughtered from the foundation of the world. Christ God realized in Himself and granted for us humans to participate in through His union with us. Christ on the cross united earth to heaven and mankind to each other in Himself.

