



Holy Ghost Orthodox Church
714 Westmoreland Avenue
PO Box 3
Slickville, PA 15684-0003
www.holyghostorthodoxchurch.org
Very Rev. Father Robert Popichak, Pastor
23 Station Street
Carnegie, PA 15106-3014
[412] 279-5640 home
[412] 956-6626 cell

Great Lent—Sunday of Orthodoxy

ON THE MEND: Please keep the following parishioners and others in your prayers for recovery from their illnesses and injuries: Archbishop Daniel, Metropolitan Antony, Metropolitan Yuriy, Anastasia [Metropolitan Yuriy's mom], Metropolitan Theodosius [OCA], Archbishop Jovan, Bishop Robert, Father George & Pani Lillian Hnatko, Father Jakiw Norton, Father Paul Stoll, Father Igor Soroka, Father Joseph Kopchak, Father Elias Warnke, Father Nestor Kowal, Father George Yatsko, Father Paul Bigelow, Father Emilian Balan, Father John & Pani Mary Anne Nakonachny, Father Steve Repa, Protopresbyter William Diakiw, Archpriest Dionysi Vitali, Protodeacon Joseph Hotrovich, Father Adam Yonitch, Pani-Dobrodijka Sonia Diakiw, Father Paisius McGrath, Father Michael Smolynec, Father Lawrence & Matushka Sophia Daniels, Father Joe Cervo, Father John Harrold [Saint Sylvester], Pani Mary Ann Chubenko, Father Jim Orr, Joshua Agosto and his family, Eva Malesnick, Nick Behun, Grace Holupka, Joseph Sliwinsky, Gary & Linda Mechtly, Evelyn Misko, Jeanne Boehing, Alex Drobot, Rachelle, Jane Golofski, Doug Diller, Harry Krewsun, Mary Alice Babcock, Dorie Kunkle, Andrea, & Melissa [Betty O'Masta's relatives], Mary Evelyn King, Sam Wadrose, Isabella Olivia Lindgren, Ethel Thomas, Donna, Erin, Michael Miller, Grace & Owen Ostrasky, Patti Sinecki, David Genshi, Sue Segeleon, Mike Gallagher, Liz Stumpf, Theodore Nixon, Michelle Corba Kapeluck, Linda Hippert & family, Margaret Vladimir, Luke Emmerling, Robert McKivitz, Liz Obradovich, Halyna Zelinska [Archbishop Daniel's mother], Charlotte, Andrew Mark Olynyk, Deborah Finley, Claire Senita, Eleanor Kelly, Bryan, Nancy Barylak, Patrick Keenan, Khrystyna Chorniy, Anthony Cormier, Nathan Forbeck, Sarah Doyle, Samuel Peters, Esther Holupka, David Vallor, Henry Faraly, Julie Eiler, Dorothy Lednovich, Bob C., Allie—young girl with leukemia, Heather Kramer, Jane Wartinbee, Matthew—young man with cancer, Nicholas Orlando, Mary Ann Kuznik, Michael Pryhodzenko, Sonia Luciw, Theresa Ditto, Mary Ann Musial, Mary Pelino, Yvonne Christy, Myron & Barbara Spak, Julia Duda, Lisa Pandle, Kris & Julie Hanczar, John Kennedy, Loretta, Nancy, Carol, & Michael Sheliga, Gaelle Kelly, Irma McDivitt, Robin Young, Mckayla, Rachel, Carl & Margaret Reed, Lydia Wilson, Robert Pointon, Walter Cecelia, John Persico, Jeff Miller, Mary

Kernick, Glenn Miller, Jean Marie, Donna & Walter McCrackin, Bonnie & Eugene Blair [Pani Gina's parents], David Hoenshell, Barbara Macino, Shelley Hill, Mikaela Kapeluck, Linda Cawley, Gerald Cogley, Helen Bozo, Corey Guich, Robert Vangrin, Pauline Witkowsky, Sera White, Deborah Smith, Nancy & Eric Dunik, Julian Stroz [young lady with cerebral palsy], Dr. Kirsten Ream, Patricia Corey, Michelle, Katie Swarm, Richard Dunst, Michelle, Patrick, Linda Morris, Howard Simpson, Chris, David Hiles, Jennifer, Jerry Quinn, Cher Mount, Frank & Janet Horrell, Jim Wandling, Gail, Sirena Sharp, Ron Paulovich, Sandi Anderson, Lina, Shirley, Denny Mader, Ella Campbell, Tom Hyatt, Bill Janiro, Jean Symanko-Andy's sister, William Lemonakis, Alma Wyke, Lindsay Romanczak & family, Virginia Catherine Pynch, Susan Lucas, Neil Carter & family, James Paluh, Mickie Weikel, Evelyn Krempasky, Tammy Strunk, Loida Esbry, Darlene Chicka Deskins, Drew, Alice & Keith Philipa, Kateryna Kocelko, Nancy Heinbaugh, Mira Filipović, Lynn, Jacqueline, Sharon, Zan Cheng, Kristy, Elaine Ellenberger, Brandon, Anna Tranchine, Demetra, Blase Urban, Catherine Hogel & children, Jennifer & Dylan, Ron Schwartz, Lydia Wilson, Flora Tomlin, Howell Swarm, Jane Bielewicz Allred, Manny "Lazarus" Lopez, Glenn & Lucas Burlack, Katie Elizabeth, Mileva, & Michael, Deirdré Straughan, Terri Paluh, Lori & Steve Lucier, Kyranna Cherpas, Pastor Bruce Nordeen, Heather Ried, Carla Perry, Linda Elliot, Dennis McDaniel, Luke Tinsley, Brent, Tricia, Katherine Gorman, Pamela Jaquette, Sherri Walewski, Marika Zeliszczuk, Donna Davis, Jackie Crimbchin, Marta Charron, Mary [Corba], Stella McKeag, Margie Sekelsky, Gary Howell, Fran Fulton, Gina Catanese, Bill Vizza, Jamie Swarm, Kevin Allen (from Ancient Faith Radio), Kathy Flaherty, Tori Reade-Henry's niece, Derick-Glen Burlack's neighbor, Michael, Nichole & Christopher, Ben Douglas, Dianne Donahue, Zachary, Natasha, Noah Willard, Jodi Hanczar, Gregory Cervo, Lisa Bruce, Martha Nezolyk, Kathy Cvetkovich, Judy, Will, Emma, Ginny, Ye-Jin, Maria, John & JoAnn, Jim & Kitty, Phil Bouse, Ralph & Beverly Stoker, Noah Willard, Nikola, Natalie, Nikola, & Nevenka Jovonovich, Julia Collier, Amy Kemerer, Thomas Smith, Tracy Slausenhaupt, Louis & Teresa Bercelli, Tom Nolan, Silvia Martin, Sarah Dorning, Dena & George, Georgia, Lawanda [Evelyn's niece], Maureen Sams, John Kendall, Judi Danser, Darcy, Denis Strittmatter, Nancy, Ian Brick, Cecilia Barnhart, Logan Magorien, Pam & Gordon Grant, Debbie & Jerry Novosel, Noah Willard, Sandra Dillard, Danielle McCann, Barry [Father Jim Orr's cousin], Tim Joyce, Mike Pawlyshyn-Jeannie Stutchell's brother, Joe Samchuck—vocations, Albert Heckman, Brianna Stumpf, Stanley Porembka, David & Terry Coyne Hartnett, Mike C., Jennifer Scheirer [Nick Behun's daughter], Catherine Beecham [Father Bob's cousin], JoAnne & Dave Andrews, Rev. Peg Bowman, Pat Jennings, Tim Sams, Mike Ruzzi, Cindy M., Stephen Popichak—Fr. Bob's brother, Mary Kay

Ludovicy, Pastor Sara Irwin, George Dilendorf, Andy Torick, Carol Behun, Erv Frye, William Lusherand, Bill Boretsky, Colin Kirton—Stage 4 pancreatic cancer, Clifford, Joe Veto, Paul Riley, Tonee & Sydnee Turner, Annette Paluh, Cathy Lotinsky, Monk Andrew, Lisa, Susan Pulcini—Father Ted Pulcini's mom. ARNOLD: Homer Paul Kline and Walter Sakol. We pray that God will grant them all a speedy recovery.

"A good deed is never lost; he who sows courtesy reaps friendship, and he who plants kindness gathers love."—Saint Basil the Great

Forget your good deeds as soon as possible...Do not record your good deeds, for if you record them, they will soon fade. But if you forget them, they will be written in eternity. (St. Nicholas of Serbia, Thought on Good and Evil)

PLEASE REMEMBER IN YOUR PRAYERS: All Christians and the others in the Middle East who are suffering during this time of great tragedy and unrest. May God watch over and keep them safe! Lord have mercy!

Please remember ALL American service men and women in your prayers. May God watch over them and all American service men and women—and bring them all home safely!

REMEMBER—PRAYERS ARE ALWAYS FREE!

Communion Fasting: nothing to eat or drink after midnight, EXCEPT in cases where your doctor tells you to eat or drink something for medical reasons: medication, diabetes, etc. If you have a question, please ask Father Bob.

AT ANY TIME—if there is an emergency, if you have questions, or if you just need to talk, please CALL FATHER BOB at [412] 279-5640.

SCHEDULE OF SERVICES

**SUNDAY, MARCH 08 Saint Basil-OBEDNITZA DOWNSTAIRS IN THE CHURCH HALL 10:30 AM
SUNDAY OF ORTHODOXY; FIRST & SECOND FINDINGS OF THE HEAD OF JOHN
THE BAPTIST; SAINT ERASMUS OF PERCHEVSKY LAVRA**

Tone 5

Hebrews 11:24-26,32-12:2; 2 Corinthians 4:6-15

John 1:43-51; Matthew 11:2-15

TRIUMPH OF ORTHODOXY
HOLY TRINITY GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH, McCandless Twp.
4:30 PM

SUNDAY, MARCH 15 Saint Basil-OBEDNITZA DOWNSTAIRS IN THE CHURCH HALL 10:30 AM
SECOND SUNDAY OF GREAT LENT—SAINT GREGORY PALAMAS-ARCHBISHOP OF
THESSALONICA; SYNAXIS OF ALL VENERABLE FATHERS OF PERCHEVSKY
LAVRA; HIEROMARTYR THEODOTUS-BISHOP OF CYRENIA; VIRGIN-MARTYR
EUTHALIA; MARTYR TROADIUS OF NEO-CAESAREA; SAINT AGATHO OF EGYPT-
MONK, 440 MARTYRS SLAIN BY THE LOMBARDS

Tone 6

Hebrews 1:10-2:3; Hebrews 7:26-8:2; Galatians 5:22-6:2
Mark 2:1-12; John 10:9-16; Luke 6:17-23

SUNDAY, MARCH 22 Saint Basil-OBEDNITZA DOWNSTAIRS IN THE CHURCH HALL 10:30 AM
THIRD SUNDAY OF GREAT LENT; ADORATION OF THE MOST HOLY CROSS; HOLY
40 MARTYRS OF SEBASTE-CYRION, CANDIDUS, DOMNUS, HESYCHIUS, &
OTHERS; URSAIANUS OF NICOMEDIA; RIGHTEOUS CAESARIUS-BROTHER OF
SAINT GREGORY THE THEOLOGIAN; SAINT TARSUS OF LICONIUM

Tone 7

Hebrews 12:1-10
Matthew 20:1-16

BULLETIN INSERT FOR 08 MARCH 2020

Saint Basil-OBEDNITZA DOWNSTAIRS IN THE CHURCH HALL
SUNDAY OF ORTHODOXY; FIRST & SECOND FINDINGS OF THE HEAD OF JOHN
THE BAPTIST; SAINT ERASMUS OF PERCHEVSKY LAVRA
TRIUMPH OF ORTHODOXY

HOLY TRINITY GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH, McCandless Twp. 4:30 PM

TROPARION—TONE 2

We venerate Thy most pure image, O Good One,
And ask forgiveness of our transgressions, O Christ our God.
Of Thy good will Thou wast pleased to ascend the cross in the flesh
And deliver Thy creatures from bondage to the enemy.
Therefore, with thankfulness we cry aloud to Thee:
Thou hast filled all with joy, O our Savior,
For thou didst come to save the world

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever,
and unto ages of ages. Amen.

KONTAKION—TONE 8

No one could describe the Word of the Father
But when He took flesh from you, O Theotokos,
He accepted to be described

And restored the fallen image to its former state
By uniting it to divine beauty.
We confess and proclaim our salvation in word and images

PROKEIMENON—TONE 4

READER: Blessed art Thou, O Lord God of our Fathers and praised and glorified is Thy name forever!

PEOPLE: Blessed art Thou, O Lord God of our Fathers and praised and glorified is Thy name forever!

READER: For Thou art just in all that Thou hast done for us!

PEOPLE: Blessed art Thou, O Lord God of our Fathers and praised and glorified is Thy name forever!

READER: Blessed art Thou, O Lord God of our Fathers

PEOPLE: And praised and glorified is Thy name forever!

ALLELUIA VERSES

Moses and Aaron are among His priests; Samuel also was among those who called on His name.

They cried to the Lord, and He answered them.

MY TO-DO LIST FOR TODAY via Judy Previc

--count my blessings

--practice kindness

--let go of what I can't control

--listen to my heart

--be productive yet calm

--just breathe

ECUMENICAL PATRIARCHATE Prot. No. 188

CATECHETICAL HOMILY AT THE OPENING OF HOLY AND GREAT LENT

+ BARTHOLOMEW

BY GOD'S MERCY

ARCHBISHOP OF CONSTANTINOPLE – NEW ROME

AND ECUMENICAL PATRIARCH

TO THE PLENITUDE OF THE CHURCH,

***MAY THE GRACE AND PEACE OF OUR LORD AND SAVIOR JESUS
CHRIST, TOGETHER WITH OUR PRAYER, BLESSING AND
FORGIVENESS BE WITH YOU ALL***

We offer hymns of thanks to the God of love as once again we enter Holy and Great Lent, the arena of ascetic struggle, fasting and abstinence,

of vigilance and spiritual awareness, of guarding our senses and prayer, of humility and self-knowledge. We are commencing a new and blessed pilgrimage toward Holy Pascha, which has "opened for us the gates of paradise." In Church and as Church, as we behold the Risen Lord of glory, we all journey together along the way of deification by grace that leads to the heavenly goods "prepared by God for those who love Him" (1 Cor. 2:9).

In the Church, where "the eternal mystery" of divine Economy is realized, all things have their unwavering theological foundation and pure soteriological reference. The incarnation of God and the deification of man are the pillars of the Orthodox faith. We move toward our eternal destination in the love of Christ. Our God, Who is "always for us," can never be reduced to some "higher power" enclosed in transcendence and the grandeur of almightiness or its holiness. Instead, He is the pre-eternal Word of God, Who "assumed our form" in order to invite humankind to the communion of His holiness, of the genuine freedom. Man, who from the beginning "has been honored with freedom," is invited to freely accept this divine gift. In the divine-human mystery of salvation, our synergy also functions as a witness in the world of the blessing that we have experienced—"what do you have that you did not receive?" (1 Cor. 4:7)—through the love for the "brother."

Holy and Great Lent is par excellence a period of experiencing this freedom bestowed by Christ. Fasting and asceticism do not comprise a discipline imposed externally, but a voluntary respect of ecclesiastical practice, obedience to Church Tradition that is not a sterile letter but a living and life-giving presence, a permanent expression of the unity, sanctity, catholicity, and apostolicity of the Church. The language of theology and hymnography speaks of "joyful sorrow" and "the spring of fasting." This is because authentic asceticism is always joyful, springful and bright. It knows no dualism or division; it does not undermine life or the world. "Depressive asceticism" that leads to an "aridity of human nature" has nothing to do with the spirit of Orthodoxy, where the ascetic life and spirituality are nurtured by resurrectional joy. In this sense, fasting and asceticism contain an alternative proposal for life before the promised false paradise of eudemonism and nihilistic pessimism.

Another essential element of Orthodox ascetic spirituality is its social character. The God of our faith is "the most social God," "a God of relations." It has rightly been said that the Holy Trinity is "the negation of loneliness." The individualization of salvation and piety, the transformation of asceticism into an individual achievement, overlook the Trinity-centered essence of the ecclesial event. When we fast for ourselves and according to our whim, then fasting does not express the spirit of the Orthodox tradition. Spirituality is the life-giving presence of the Holy Spirit, Which is always "a

spirit of communion.” The genuine Orthodox spiritual life always refers to the ecclesial dimension of our existence and not to some “spiritual self-realization.”

In adhering to the dedication of this year by the Holy Great Church of Christ to “the pastoral renewal and due concern for our youth,” we call upon our Orthodox young men and women to participate in the spiritual struggle of Great Lent in order to experience its anthropological depth and liberating spirit, to understand that Orthodox asceticism is a way of freedom and existential fulfilment in the context of the blessed life in the Church, whose core is to “speak the truth in love.” Our Orthodox youth is called to discover the holistic character of fasting, which is praised in the Triodion as “the commencement of spiritual struggles,” as “food for the soul,” as “mother of all good things and all virtues.” It is not simply an abstinence from certain foods, but a struggle against self-love and self-sufficiency, a sensitivity toward our suffering neighbor, and a tangible response of support. It is a Eucharistic use of creation, existential fulfilment, communion of life and solidarity. Asceticism, fasting, prayer and humility convey the fragrance and light of the Resurrection, from which they receive meaning and direction. As the quintessence of ecclesial life and its eschatological orientation, the Resurrection inseparably links the ascetic life with the Divine Eucharist, the sacrament of foretaste of the ineffable joy of the Kingdom of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. The fact that the Divine Eucharist is preserved as the center of the life in the Orthodox Church is associated with the fact that the Resurrection is the foundation of our faith and the bright horizon of our ascetic spirituality as well as of our good witness in the world.

With these thoughts, we humbly invoke upon all of you the mercy and blessing of the God of love, so that we may pursue the race of Holy and Great Lent with devout heart, reach the saving Passion of Christ our God and, glorifying His ineffable forbearance, shine brightly for the feast of His splendid Resurrection that leads us from death to endless life.

Holy and Great Lent 2020

+ BARTHOLOMEW of Constantinople

Fervent supplicant for all before God

The Triple Meaning of the Axios

Posted on February 15, 2020 | by John Nichiporuk Reading time: 5 minutes

You can always hear a very ancient exclamation, most often in Ancient Greek – ἄξιος, which means “worthy”, during the ordination of the deacon, presbyter or bishop. The purpose and meaning of this ancient exclamation may seem obvious, but not everything is as simple as it seems at first

glance. What is the history of this liturgical call? What an important role could it have played in the life of the Church?

The History of the Axios

According to the Eastern tradition (as opposed to the Western tradition, in which the analogue of the Axios, *Dignus est*, is said before the ordination), the proclamation of the Axios is made after the ordination of the clergyman. This exclamation was first mentioned in an ancient Syrian manuscript of the 3rd–5th centuries, titled *The Testament of our Lord Jesus Christ* (I, 21), which says that after the ordination of a bishop, the people exclaim Axios three times. Prior to the 11th century, there was no Axios in the rite of the ordination of a bishop in Byzantine liturgical books, and people greeted their new bishop with a holy kiss. The kissing of newly baptized Christians by the bishop is a remarkable reminiscence of this kiss (Hippolytus of Rome, *Apostolic Tradition* 21). The custom of greeting a newly ordained bishop with Axios at the time of vesting him in the omophorion reached Constantinople in the 11th century, whereas the ordination of deacons and presbyters still ended with a kiss and was not accompanied by any exclamation. Beginning in the 14th century, the Axios was already sung during both the deacon's and the priest's ordinations: in the first case, while laying on the orarion and conferring the fans; in the second case, while transferring the back end of the orarion from the left shoulder to the right shoulder (i. e. turning it into an epitachelion) and while putting on the phelonion.

Russian Tradition and the Influence of Alexandria

In contrast to the Euchology of the Church of Constantinople, the Euchology of Alexandria prescribed the singing of the Axios not only during the ordination into the ranks of deacons and above but also during the appointment of minor orders, e. g., readers and subdeacons. The singing of the Axios was preceded by a bishop's exhortation, *Blessed is the Lord! Here, the Servant of God [Name] is being made a reader/a subdeacon of the holy Church [Name] in the Name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit.* During the 17th-century liturgical reform under Patriarch Nikon, this anticipatory call was adopted by the Russian Church and became part of the rite of elevation into the ranks of a reader and a singer, as well as those of the protodeacon, archdeacon, hegumen, archimandrite, and protopresbyter. All these orders (except for elevation to the rank of reader and singer) were accompanied by singing the Axios. In modern practice, the ordaining bishop hands over another liturgical item and exclaims "Axios!," the call is chanted and repeated three times by the clergymen in the altar, and then by the choir three times on behalf of all the faithful. In addition to ordinations, the Axios is also sung during the enthronement of the Patriarchs, as well as when conferring Church awards.

Spiritual Significance

All rituals are important—from the very first rites to the bishop's prayers and the confirmation of the administered Sacrament by the faithful—because every part of the rite has its own value and every liturgical action has its cause. Thus, according to St. Symeon of Thessalonica (+1429), the words "The divine grace that always heals the powerless and fills the lacking, procures [Name] the reverent subdeacon to the deacon" already effect the Sacrament of Ordination and make the subdeacon a deacon. However, this is still not enough and "it is necessary that he bows his head to the sacred altar, and kneels down, and that the hand of the hierarch is laid upon him, and the prescribed prayers and petitions are said, and the sealing is done, and the utterance is made: *Axios*, and the sacred kiss is done. For all these things together make one ordained, and all must be done" (St. Symeon of Thessalonica, *On the Holy Temple and its Consecration*). By singing *Axios* the bishop does not only testify that the candidate is worthy of priesthood, but at the same time the exclamation itself is a prayer for him to remain worthy of this grace. No one is worthy of this dignity, so St. Symeon recommends that the person who is being ordained should humble himself at that moment. The *Axios* is proclaimed by the bishop and is repeated three times both in the altar and in the church itself, as a sign that all who attend "believe in this grace, affirm it together with the heavenly hosts, and rejoice greatly in it." Furthermore, the *Axios* indicates that the one who is elected "has become worthy before God, is known by angels and men, and must behave worthy of this cause."

Triple Role of the *Axios*

There are three roles that the *Axios* plays in the divine service. We have already mentioned the first two: one is the testimony of the fact that the priest deserves to carry out the church ministry, and the second is that it is a prayer that he may remain worthy. The third role that this liturgical call plays used to have a more pronounced and meaningful character in the early Church, when the candidates for clerical office were elected by the faithful people themselves. The bishop ordained the candidate, while the people sealed their choice with a loud *Axios*. This ancient ecclesiastical right is also reflected in the deacon's call "Command" before the sacrament, through which the entire church community's consent is solicited. The history of the Church knows examples of the exclamation "*Anaxios!*," i.e. "Not worthy," e. g., during the cheirotonia of Demophilus, the Arian Bishop of Constantinople. In line with the logic of St. Symeon of Thessalonica, the ordination in this case may not be considered valid because it is not accepted by the people. Thus, the exclamation of the *Axios* is not only a beautiful and solemn element of the divine service but also reminds of the

role and responsibility that lay people should have in the life of the Church, not just as "consumers" of the Sacraments, but as active members of the Body of Christ.

The Sunday of the Last Judgment Matthew 25:31-46

When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: For I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me. Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee hungered, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me. Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels: For I was an hungered, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not. Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee? Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me. And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal. (KJV).

The current Gospel read each year has always held deep interest for me. Each time during the Divine Liturgy when the petition for captives and their salvation is recited, my experiences with prisoners comes to mind.

I have more than thirty years of professional training and experience in the field of criminal justice. For more than four and a half years, I worked in different capacities in a residential state-run institution for juvenile court-committed youths.

For nineteen years I worked for the Pennsylvania Board of Probation and Parole as a hearing examiner. I conducted parole grant interviews, violation hearings and victim interviews for thousands of incarcerated prisoners

For an additional five and a half years, I worked as an administrator for the Governor's Justice Commission. The job responsibilities included working with all aspects of the criminal justice system for crime control and prevention.

While a parish priest for almost nineteen years, I visited and corresponded with prisoners including visiting a prisoner on death row monthly for eight years. For a short time, I served as a chaplain in a federal prison in nearby West Virginia.

Our weekly parish bulletin with the Sunday sermon was sent regularly to various state and federal prisons. Prisoners and workers in the fields of law enforcement, corrections and parole were regularly remembered in each bulletin.

The Orthodox Church has shown an increased interest in prison ministry in recent years. This was not always the case. For many, many years, Orthodox Christians went without chaplaincy and ministry services specific to their interests.

Many, probably most, of the youths and adults in correctional institutions come from backgrounds of poverty. The current Gospel speaks about being attentive to the least among us.

Incarcerated children and youths coming from backgrounds in poverty and incarcerated adults from similar circumstances need the love of Jesus Christ. Applying this love is not always easy.

People working in the criminal justice system have needs and merit the attention Jesus Christ wants for each person. Crime victims need, require, and deserve significant attention and services that bring healing.

Making the present Gospel come alive in daily life takes considerable effort. Parish churches and serious Christians have the opportunity to make a difference. Parishes and serious Christians can do something to personalize this Gospel.

Parents, brothers and sisters and relatives of incarcerated children, youth and adults are in need of compassion and understanding. Crime victims of all ages are hurting deeply, starving for attention and benefit from genuine love that heals.

People working in the field of criminal justice are often under great stress each day. The stress is carried home at the end of the work day. Police, correctional officers, and parole officers deal daily with the most violent among us.

Parish churches offer places for us to collect our thoughts and unite us with God. Criminal justice professionals, crime victims, and relatives of the incarcerated have opportunities to find peace and direction in the parish church.

Newly released prisoners are able to begin life anew in a parish church. The Lord God offers renewal for each person of faith regardless of status in life. The Lord God offers absolute hope.

Parishes and clergy involved in prison ministry make a difference. Sending a parish bulletin to a prisoner communicates Christian interest. Parishioners going to a local jail or prison for Bible study or religious classes are a healthy presence.

Supporting crime victims and hurting relatives of a person incarcerated is consistent with the present Gospel. Christ is in each person and loves each person including the incarcerated, crime victims, and criminal justice professionals.

The present Gospel is proclaimed every year as Great Lent approaches. Each person will be judged based upon his or her daily relationships. Today's Gospel equates daily life relationships with the personal care and treatment of Jesus Christ.

Being a Christian is a serious undertaking. Being a Christian is not to be taken for lightly. Christians are expected to be very responsible in daily relationships from the time of Holy Baptism until departure from this life

Meatfare Sunday. Holy HIEROMARTYR Harlambos.

February 10/23, 2020 ,Hidden Valley, Pennsylvania. Father Rodney Torbic

Metropolitan Anthony of Sourozh on the Last Judgment

Posted on February 23, 2020|by Metropolitan Anthony of Sourozh

In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.

We remember the Day of the Last Judgment of the Lord today. What is so scary about this judgment? Is that the punishment that we may suffer? No! In a sense, the punishment alleviates the weight of our sin; the punished feels that he has paid his debt and that he can now walk freely. The terrible thing in this judgment is that we will stand before the Living God when it is too late to change anything in our lives, and find out that we have lived in vain, that there is only emptiness and meaninglessness in our lives. The whole meaning of life was to love actively—not sentimentally, not with feelings, but with deeds: to love according to Jesus's words: he who loves must give his life for those who need love; not for those who are dear to me, but for that neighbor who needs me...—...suddenly we will find that we have missed all that... We could have loved God, we could have loved our neighbor, we could have loved ourselves, that is, we could have treated ourselves with respect and seen in ourselves the full magnificence of the image of God, all the greatness of our calling to become "partakers of Divine nature" (2 Peter 1:4)—and we walked past all of that because it was easier to stay alive than to live; it was easier to live without living.

What would have happened if any of us had come home and seen that his or her most loved person lay dead? That is the moment of horror, that is the moment when one would realize what love really is, and that now it is too late, that one cannot give love to that person anymore because his very life is taken away from him... What would it feel like for us?! When we stand before Christ, won't we see that we are responsible for His crucifixion because of the way we spent our lives: not worthy of ourselves, of Him, and of our neighbor. We will see that the murderer is not the one who had escaped before we came home but that the murderer is us!

What will it feel like to come and face Christ then? It's not about punishment, it's about the terror of yourself. We still have some time; Jesus tells us that there will be no mercy for those who did not show mercy, and that we would say falsely and in vain that we love God if we do not love our neighbor. Today, He tells us what love for our neighbor is, and that it is transferred to Him; because to serve any person, any other person, is to please Him and serve Him!

Let's think about it! We have repentance, i. e., the return from earth to heaven, the transformation of heart and mind, the reversal; and this reversal depends on our will and our determination. Saint Seraphim of Sarov said that there is only one difference between a perishing sinner and a saint who is being saved: it is determination. Do we have it? Are we ready to act with determination?

One more thing: we will gather here next week for the service of forgiveness; we will ask forgiveness and give forgiveness. However, it makes no sense to ask for forgiveness without yielding the fruit of repentance; if we remain as we are today, it makes no sense to ask for forgiveness for being the same as we were yesterday! We need to reconsider our lives and ourselves—what we are guilty of before each and every individual—and to decide to change it. We need to ask for forgiveness not in order to feel that we are now free from the past, but in order to embark on the new way of living; to begin living in a new way, to have a new relationship with those people whom we have humiliated, offended, or robbed spiritually and in every way.

When we forgive, we must do it responsibly, too. Let's contemplate our lives. Let's ask what would have happened if we had to stand before God today—and see that we are hollow, that we have lived pointlessly and in vain. What would happen if we stood before God empty-handed now and looked around and saw that our salvation depends on those who are ready to forgive us and on whether we are able to forgive them—and that neither they nor we are able to do that.

Let us reflect on that; because this is not a matter of preaching, nor of reading the Gospel, this is a matter of life and death: let us choose the path of life! Amen.

February 10, 1991—Translated by The Catalogue of Good Deeds
Source: https://azbyka.ru/otechnik/Antonij_Surozhskij/propovedi/15_7



How To Fight the Devil! February 25, 2020 ·Fr. Barnabas Powell

The Fallen Angels stumble from their lofty place and become enemies of the Goodness of God. Our own spiritual falls follow a similar pattern and learning how to avoid that pattern is key to fighting against the stumbles that make us partners with the devil and his demons.

And, I don't know about you, but I'm tired of being on the devil's side in my choices and my behaviors!

Look at our Lesson today in Jude 1:1-10:

Jude, a servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James,

To those who are called, beloved in God the Father and kept for Jesus Christ:

May mercy, peace, and love be multiplied to you.

Beloved, being very eager to write to you of our common salvation, I found it necessary to write appealing to you to contend for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints. For admission has been secretly gained by some who long ago were designated for this condemnation, ungodly persons who pervert the grace of our God into licentiousness and deny the only Master and our Lord Jesus Christ.

Now I desire to remind you, though you were once for all fully informed, that the Lord saved a people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed those who did not believe. And the angels that did not keep their own position but left their proper dwelling have been kept by him in eternal chains in the nether gloom until the judgment of the great day; just as Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding cities, which likewise acted

immorally and indulged in unnatural lust, serve as an example by undergoing a punishment of eternal fire.

Yet in like manner these men in their dreamings defile the flesh, reject authority, and revile the glorious ones. But when the archangel Michael, contending with the devil, disputed about the body of Moses, he did not presume to pronounce a reviling judgment upon him, but said, "The Lord rebuke you." But these men revile whatever they do not understand, and by those things that they know by instinct as irrational animals, they are destroyed.

There are some very important insights here on how angels and men fall. In fact, if we grasp these insights, we will not only learn how to fast but how to live as Christians our whole lives. Big claim, to be sure, so let's see if I can pull this off.

Look at how St. Jude describes the fall of angels:

- They "did not keep" their position
- They "left their proper dwelling"
- They "have been kept" in eternal chains!

It seems the fall of angels has everything to do with a self-inflicted wound and all the consequences of their fall are directly related to their own choices! The angels failed to value what they had rather than the temptation of what they "could" have. They departed their privileged place for the siren's song of delusion. And the end result is, for their own good and for the good of all creation, the Lord of love limited the caustic fallout of their selfishness by imprisoning them in chains to limit the damage of their folly! Amazing love God has even for His "enemies," don't you think?

Then Jude says that men, imitating the fallen angels, make the same mistakes! And the proof of their imitation of the wrong example is seen in "dreamings." Isn't that powerful? Our fantasy lives reveal our deepest spiritual illnesses! But it's also seen in men rejecting authority and a quickness in dismissing those who have such authority. In other words, their lack of humility feeds their ruined lives!

St. Jude uses the powerful story of St. Michael, the Archangel and his dispute with the devil. St. Michael didn't resort to name calling or a laundry list of all of Satan's faults or mistakes. In his humility St. Michael refused to even denigrate the devil. He simply said, "The Lord rebuke you." And that was enough for St. Michael to prevail in his dispute and defeat the evil one.

Today, do you "revile whatever" you don't understand? Do you find your life destroyed by following instincts undisciplined by the wisdom of faith? If so, your life is following a very familiar and ancient pattern to destruction. But there's hope! Turn from this foolish way of life and return to your

intended purpose by embracing the way of life that imitates wisdom and not self-destruction. Be Orthodox on Purpose!

In Christ Service, Fr. George L. Livanos, Proistamenos

All Saints Greek Orthodox Church, Canonsburg, PA

“As the Prophets beheld, as the Apostles have taught, as the Church has received, as the teachers have dogmatized, as the universe has agreed, as Grace has shown forth, as Truth has revealed, as falsehood has been dissolved, as Wisdom has presented, as Christ has awarded: thus we declare, thus we assert, thus we preach Christ, our true God, and honor His Saints in words, in writings, in thoughts, in sacrifices, in churches, in Holy Icons; on the one hand worshiping and reverencing Christ as God and Lord; and on the other hand honoring as true servants of the same Lord of all, and accordingly offering them veneration. This is the Faith of the Apostles; this is the Faith of the Fathers; this is the Faith of the Orthodox; this is the Faith which has established the universe!”