



SS PETER AND PAUL ORTHODOX CHURCH

A PARISH OF THE ORTHODOX CHURCH IN AMERICA, DIOCESE OF NEW YORK AND NEW JERSEY

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November 13, 2011

22nd SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

St. John Chrysostom

- 9:10am –Hours
- 9:30am – Divine Liturgy
Epistle: *Gal. 6:11-18*
Heb. 7:26-8:2 (Saint)
Gospel: *Luke 10:25-37*
John 10:9-16 (Saint)
- Church School
- Panikhida, followed by Coffee Hour – in memory of June Bianchini, offered by Bianchini /Wanko Family.

Schedule of Services

TUESDAY, NOV. 15 – NATIVITY FAST BEGINS

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 19

6:00pm – Great Vespers and Confessions

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 20

9:10am – Hours
9:30am – Divine Liturgy
6:00pm – Great Vespers

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 21 – THE ENTRY OF THE MOST-HOLY THEOTOKOS INTO THE TEMPLE

9:30am – Divine Liturgy

The Jefferson Bible Rewrite

During this week we remember two saints who are intimately connected with the Holy Bible. One is the Gospel writer Matthew, and the other is Saint John Chrysostom.

Matthew's Gospel enlightens readers about Jesus Christ as the promised Savior and fulfiller of the Old Testament prophecies. Writing to his fellow Jews, Matthew presents Christ's life as the completion of God's plan for humanity, worked out over the centuries of Israel's history.

Saint John Chrysostom loved the Bible, and passionately exhorted Christians to read it. He wrote, "If we are willing to examine the Scriptures in this way, carefully and systematically, we shall be able to obtain our salvation."

Chrysostom was particularly concerned about children: "Never deem it an unnecessary thing that [a child] should be a diligent hearer of the divine Scriptures...Do not imagine that the monk alone stands in need of these lessons from Scripture. Of all others, the children just about to enter the world especially need them."

We might imagine that the brilliant Thomas Jefferson also honored the Scriptures and agreed with Chrysostom that they undergird our salvation. But a small book called "The Jefferson Bible" proves that we would be wrong.

To create his book, Thomas Jefferson cut, rearranged and pasted the Gospels, leaving out the miracles and other parts he deemed useless. Jefferson admired many sayings of Jesus as displays of "fine imagination, correct morality and the most lovely benevolence." But other sayings were full of "so much ignorance, so much absurdity, so much untruth, charlatanism and imposture, as to pronounce it impossible that such contradictions should have proceeded from the same Being." Jefferson blamed the "feeble minds" of the disciples for the problem. They had piled superstitions, fabrications and "things

Intercessory Prayer

THE LIVING:

Eva Benda, Valentina Benda, Cathryn Christensen, Olga DeMay, Marianne Guagenti, George Hook, Peter Mazula, Walter Milk, Helen Pirniak, Stephen & Lillian Sokol, Elizabeth Zuber.

THE DEPARTED:

Benedict Benda, Georgette Saba, Matilda Skripak, Andrew Bacsik, Helen Pawlush, Mary Milk, Antonina Rotko, Helen Cotrone, June Bianchini, Maryanne Benda, Anne Verona.

impossible" on top of Jesus' pure moral and ethical teachings. So he removed their additions, leaving the exquisite moral precepts intact.

The resulting book has strange gaps left by Jefferson's editing. One example is Jesus' encounter with the man born blind. The disciples ask Him who sinned, the man or his parents. Jesus answers, "Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents; but that the works of God should be made manifest in him."

But the very next verse is, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that entereth not by the door of the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber." The blind man's healing, the exact thing to which Jesus is referring when He says that the works of God should be made manifest in him, is gone. The sheepfold verses don't even logically follow, and the healing miracle which exemplifies Jesus' divine compassion is consigned to the wastebasket.

There are people today who also cut and paste the Bible, and accuse the followers of Jesus Christ of adding to His original teachings. But we are called to take the Bible as the Church has given it to us. Otherwise we are, in Chrysostom's words, merely performing "labors without advantage."



Today's Memorial Offering

• *Bread and Wine for the Holy Eucharist* – in memory of my husband Joseph, on the Anniversary of our Wedding November 16, - by Terry Cimboic

Announcements

❖ The Parish Council meeting will be tomorrow, Monday, November 14 at 7:00pm. All Parish Council members are urged to attend.

❖ The **Nativity Fast** begins Tuesday, Nov. 15th and ends after the Divine Liturgy on the Feast of the Nativity of our Lord, December 25th. Please remember the importance of the spiritual part of the Fast – make proper preparations and receive private Confession and Holy Communion during this time.

❖ On **Wed. November 30, 2011** at 7:00pm His Grace Bishop Michael will visit our parish with a special presentation about the Feast of the Nativity of Our Lord Jesus Christ – "The True Meaning of Christmas". We will explore the meaning of this wonderful feast as conveyed to us through scripture, the liturgical services and hymns, as well as the various holy traditions of our Orthodox Church. A question and answer period will follow the presentation. Light refreshments and fellowship will be held in the Church Hall.

❖ Our **Annual Parish Meeting** will be on Sunday, December 4th after the Divine Liturgy. Please plan on attending – your presence is necessary.

Our Deepest Sympathy

to Eva, Philip and all the Benda Family on the loss of their beloved husband, father and grandfather, our parishioner **Benedict Benda**, who fell asleep in the Lord on Sat. November 12, 2011. May he rest in peace in God's Heavenly Kingdom! Memory Eternal!

Arrangements are as follows: Viewing in Koch Funeral Home – Mon: 7-9pm; Tue: 2-4pm, 7-9pm with Panikhida at 7:30pm. Burial Service in our Church – Wed. 9:00am.

Announcements

❖ There will be a **Healing Service & Open House** today, Sunday, November 13th at 4:00 p.m at Holy Assumption Orthodox Church in Clifton, NJ. His Grace, Bishop Michael will be the celebrant for the service and will offer the homily. Fellowship will be held in the parish hall following the service. Everyone is welcome.

❖ **The NJ District of the FOCA is accepting donations of any amount on behalf of Priscilla Shipley**, the sick wife of a final year seminarian at St. Tikhon's and mother of three young children. Priscilla is suffering from Lyme Disease and is taking steroids to help her breathe. Many days she has difficulty walking or even standing and is in too much pain to get out of bed. Over the past several months they have been attempting to raise enough money to try a very promising new treatment involving intravenous Vitamin C which is not covered by insurance. Please keep Priscilla in your prayers. Your donations will be accepted at the candle desk.

❖ **Seminarian St. Nicholas Wish List Project** – Our Seminarian Family this year is Dn. James Bozeman, his wife Katherine, and their two sons Alexander, age 12 and Gabriel, age 6. Please help fulfill their St. Nicholas wish list by selecting an item or two from the giving tree in the Church Hall. Gift items will be collected until Sunday, November 27th. For your convenience, monetary donations will be accepted and converted into gifts or gift cards. Please see Marge Kovach for details.

❖ St. Mary's A.C.R.Y. Chapter #36 is holding their **Annual St. Nicholas Dinner** on Sunday, December 11, 2011 at St. Mary's Orthodox Church (89 West 29th St.) at 12 Noon. For reservations call: 201-823-0305, or 201-436-5221. Reservations close December 5, 2011.

❖ A new issue of "**The Orthodox Church**" is available at the candle desk. Due to a limited number, please pick one per family.

Welcome Visitors

We welcome all visitors to our Divine Liturgy. It is our joy to have you with us today. If this is your first visit to our parish, we welcome you and invite you to return as often as you are able.

While Holy Communion may only be received by prepared Orthodox Christians, our non-Orthodox guests are welcome to join us in venerating the Cross, receiving blessed bread at the conclusion of the Divine Liturgy and for fellowship in our Church Hall after the service.

The Nativity Fast – Why We Fast

by Fr. Stephen Freeman

**November 15, marks the beginning of the Nativity Fast (40 days before Christmas).
The following article offers some thoughts on the purpose of fasting.**

Fasting is not very alive and well in the Christian world. Much of that world has long lost any living connection with the historical memory of Christian fasting. Without the guidance of Tradition, many modern Christians either do not fast, or constantly seek to re-invent the practice, sometimes with unintended consequences.

There are other segments of Christendom who have tiny remnants of the traditional Christian fast, but in the face of a modern world have reduced the tradition to relatively trivial acts of self-denial.

I read recently (though I cannot remember where) that the rejection of Hesychasm was the source of all heresy. In less technical terms we can say that knowing God in truth, participating in His life, union with Him through humility, prayer, love of enemy and repentance before all and for everything, is the purpose of the Christian life. Hesychasm (Greek Hesychia=Silence) is the name applied to the Orthodox tradition of ceaseless prayer and inner stillness.

But these are incorrectly understood if they are separated from knowledge of God and participation in His life, union with Him through humility, prayer, love of enemy and repentance before all and for everything.

And it is the same path of inner knowledge of God (with all its components) that is the proper context of fasting. If we fast but do not forgive our enemies – our fasting is of no use. If we fast and do not find it drawing us into humility – our fasting is of no use. If our fasting does not make us yet more keenly aware of the fact that we are sinful before all and responsible to all then it is of no benefit. If our fasting does not unite us with the life of God – which is meek and lowly – then it is again of no benefit.

Fasting is not dieting. Fasting is not about keeping a Christian version of kosher. Fasting is about hunger and humility (which is increased as we allow ourselves to become weak). Fasting is about allowing our heart to break.

I have seen greater good accomplished in souls through their failure in the fasting season than in the souls of those who "fasted well." Publicans enter the kingdom of God before Pharisees pretty much every time.

Why do we fast? Perhaps the more germane question is "why do we eat?" Christ quoted Scripture to the evil one and said, "Man does not live by bread alone but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God." We eat as though our life depended on it and it does not. We fast because our life depends on the word of God.

I worked for a couple of years as a hospice chaplain. During that time, daily sitting at the side of the beds of dying patients – I learned a little about how we die. It is a medical fact that many people become "anorexic" before death – that is – they cease to want food. Many times family and even doctors become concerned and force food on a patient who will not survive. Interestingly, it was found that patients who became anorexic had less pain than those who, having become anorexic, were forced to take food. (None of this is about the psychological anorexia that afflicts many of our youth. That is a tragedy)

It is as though at death our bodies have a wisdom we have lacked for most of our lives. It knows that what it needs is not food – but something deeper. The soul seeks and hungers for the living God. The body and its pain become a distraction. And thus in God's mercy the distraction is reduced.

Christianity as a religion – as a theoretical system of explanations regarding heaven and hell, reward and punishment, is simply Christianity that has been distorted from its true form. Either we know the living God or we have nothing. Either we eat His flesh and drink His blood or we have no life in us. The rejection of Hesychasm is the source of all heresy.

Why do we fast? We fast so that we may live like a dying man – and in dying we can be born to eternal life.