



Weekly Bulletin

St. Nicholas Orthodox Church

A Community of the Orthodox Church in America

Witnessing to the Apostolic Faith in Lake County for over 44 Years

Father Andrew Clements, Pastor

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Sunday	Sept 16	<i>16th Sunday after Pentecost / Tone 7 / Great Martyr Euphemia, the All-Praised</i>		
Pledge Sunday		9:00 am	Church School	
		10:00 am	Divine Liturgy	Coffee Hour
Saturday	Sept 22	<i>Prophet Jonah</i>		
		5:30 pm	Great Vespers	
Sunday	Sept 23	<i>17th Sunday after Pentecost / Tone 8 / Conception of John the Baptist</i>		
		Readings:	2 Cor 6:16 - 7:1	Luke 5:1-11
		9:00 am	Church School	
		10:00 am	Divine Liturgy	Coffee Hour

ATTENDANCE / STEWARDSHIP / Sep 9

Attendance: (Adults 109, Children 39)	148
Operating	\$3,956.00
OCA Assessments	65.00
Uganda Children	125.00
Charities	77.00
Icons	50.00

TODAY IS PLEDGE SUNDAY

Hopefully, everyone has turned in their Pledge Card during the regular collection. If not, please do so ASAP as this helps the Budget Committee complete their work on the 2019 Operating Budget.

EVENING ADULT CLASS

The Class will begin this week on Sept 18 at 7:00 pm. We will be studying the Epistle to the Hebrews so please bring your Orthodox Study Bible.

SPECIAL COLLECTION

Please be generous on Sunday, Sept 30 during the Special Collection taken to support our Diocesan Seminarians. Our own Brian Crivella is beginning his final year as a student at St Vladimir's.

COUNCIL MEETING

Thursday, Sept 20 at 7:00 pm.

COOKIE / FOOD SALE

Mark your calendars for the Sale on Saturday, Dec 15 beginning at 9:00 am.

PRAYER CORNER + + + + +

Eleanor Alexander (Tom's mom), Perry (Capitan), Sbdcn Leonard, Kathy (Denise F's sis), Jim (Ruth's dad), John (Adam's nephew), Ted Geletka, (Fr's frnd), infant Julian, John Clements, Willie (Elena G's son), Sarah Crivella, Darlene (Mary V's csn), Nancy, (Ruth B's frnd), Joella (Lu D's daughter), Tom Tulloch (Dzura frnd), suffering Christians in Ukraine and the Middle East.

Anniversaries: Ron & Gloria Sieloff (9/19).

Birthdays: Stefan Lechintan, Abby Moore (9/16), Elaine Kisha (9/18), Maureen Medakovich, Mary Valko, Jenny Cunningham (9/19), Suzanne Gubser, Elizabeth Kirouac (9/21), Marcus Covelli (9/22).

Newborns: Theodora (Tom & Miranda) Matthew (Alexandr & Olga), Sophia (Patrick & Deanna), James Mitch & Winnie), Nicholas (Jonathan & Larissa).

Expecting: David & Maria, Daniel & Danielle, Colin & Tamuna, Tom & Laura, Chad & Meredith, Matt & Michelle.

Departed: Katherine (9/13, Adam C's cousin), Janet Weinland (9/5, Sharon G's mom), Olimpia Tandeia (8/11, Calin L's grandma).

Our Seminarian: Brian Crivella & Family.

September 30 is Support our Seminarians Sunday

Hearing and Keeping the Word of God

by Fr Lawrence Farley

In the “bad ol’ days” when I was still highly resistant to what I now call “Holy Tradition,” I was keen to sniff out the slightest whiff of idolatrous veneration of the Mother of God — including employing the term used by those poor deluded people (the Catholics)—“the Mother of God.” (I did not really know back then that the Orthodox Church existed; for me Christians only came in two flavors: Protestant and Catholic.) Back then, my favorite Marian verse was Luke 11:28. In response to a woman who lifted up her voice in the crowd and cried out, “Blessed is the womb that bore you and the breasts that you sucked!” Jesus replied, “Blessed rather are those who hear the Word of God and keep it!” So there you have it: Jesus Himself rebuked someone who praised His mother—which just goes to show you that we shouldn’t praise her either. My understanding of the verse, common to Protestants like me, was not exactly based on deep exegesis — or in fact on any exegesis. I didn’t ask, for example, what it was in the woman’s praise that Jesus objected to or why Saint Luke of all people (who had already reported repeatedly that Mary was indeed blessed; see Luke 1:42, 45, 48) would include this incident in his Gospel. I was just happy to find a stick with which to beat the Catholics. Never look a polemical gift horse in the mouth.

Some people, motivated by a laudable concern to honor the Mother of God, try to evade the force of the Lord’s reply, and suggest that the Greek word *menoun*/*menoun* doesn’t mean “rather,” but “indeed.” It is true that it can mean that, such as when Paul uses the word that way in Philippians 3:8. In this reading of Luke 11:28, Jesus simply meant to applaud the woman for praising His Mother and draw a generalization from it: “Not just My Mother, but all who keep the Word of God!” But this interpretation seems forced; our Lord generally responded to such gushing praise not with applause, but with rebuke and correction, such as when He rebuked the rich young ruler for addressing Him as “Good Teacher” [Mark 10:17-18]. The psychological context of Luke 11:28 requires not appreciation and extension, but the same kind of rebuke that Christ always offered to such fulsome praise. The word *menoun* here has the same corrective force that it has in Romans 9:20, where it is used as a rebuke. In Luke 11:28, Christ is not affirming the woman’s flattery, but rebuking it. The question is: Why?

The fact that Luke alone records this exchange is significant. Luke wrote as a Gentile, and was concerned to stress the universality of Christ’s salvation. For example, when Mark quotes the prophet Isaiah to explain the significance of John the Baptizer, he cites the passage, “The voice of one crying in the wilderness, ‘Prepare the way of the Lord, make His paths straight’” [Mark 1:3]. When Luke quotes the same passage from Isaiah, he carries the citation on to include the words, “and all flesh shall see the salvation of

God.” Or again, when Matthew gives our Lord’s genealogy, he traces it back to Abraham, the father of the Jewish people. But when Luke gives our Lord’s genealogy, he traces it back to Adam, the father of the human race. Luke is pre-eminently the evangelist of God’s universal salvation, a salvation that overflows the borders of Israel and inundates the Gentile world as well.

Our Lord (and John the Baptizer before Him) encountered a narrower and more nationalistic understanding of salvation. For many in Israel, salvation began and ended with Israel and the Jewish people. To be saved it was enough to be Jewish, a hearer of the Law. John the Baptizer railed against this view when he said that the Pharisees and Sadducees should not say to themselves that it was sufficient that they had Abraham as their father. Being a descendant of Abraham was no great thing — God could raise up children of Abraham from these stones if He wanted [Matthew 3:7-9]. Biological descent ultimately counted for nothing.

It was this unthinking presupposition, lying at the heart of the woman’s gushing praise, that Jesus took aim at. Her praise, though well-intentioned, presupposed that blessedness came through facts of mere biology, such as motherhood — or national descent. In rebuking her unthinking flattery, Christ was not rebuking praise of His Mother, but the heedless assumption that biology could sanctify, for it was just this assumption that lay at the heart of the theology of the Pharisees and Sadducees and of all who trusted in their Jewishness to save them. Luke includes this incident in his Gospel not to minimize veneration for the Lord’s Mother (who was the center of attention in his first two chapters), but to stress how keeping the Word of God was all that one needed to be blessed. Gentiles could not rely on biology or ethnic descent to save them, but they could keep the Word of God after they heard it. This passage ultimately has nothing to do with the question of whether or not we should praise and venerate Mary. It has everything to do with the universal love of God and what He requires for salvation.

Why then do the Orthodox use this passage as part of the Gospel reading for every almost Marian feast? Because it reveals why Mary is blessed and why we love her. Mary is blessed not simply because she bore the Lord, but because she heard the Word of God and kept it. And for those who read Luke’s Gospel carefully to discover its meaning and not simply to pick out polemical ammo, we learn that Luke himself stressed how Mary kept the Word after she had heard it. During the long nativity narrative in which she had center stage, Luke reports that Mary kept all these things, pondering them in her heart [Luke 2:19, 51]. We Gentiles who do not share her Jewish descent can do the same, and also be blessed.