



Weekly Bulletin

St. Nicholas Orthodox Church

A Community of the Orthodox Church in America

Witnessing to the Apostolic Faith in Lake County for over 45 Years

Father Andrew Clements, Pastor

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Number 12

Sunday	Mar 17	<i>1st Sunday of Great Lent / Tone 1/ Triumph of Orthodoxy</i>	
		9:00 am	Church School
		10:00 am	Divine Liturgy Coffee Hour
		5:00 pm	Festal Vespers at St Michael's
Wednesday	Mar 20	<i>2nd Wednesday of Great Lent</i>	
		4:00 pm	Confession
		6:30 pm	Presanctified Liturgy
Saturday	Mar 23	<i>2nd Saturday of Great Lent</i>	
		5:30 pm	Great Vespers Confession
Sunday	Mar 24	<i>2nd Sunday of Great Lent / Tone 2/ Gregory Palamas</i>	
		Readings:	Heb 7:26-8:2 Jn 10:9-16
		9:00 am	Church School
		10:00 am	Divine Liturgy Coffee Hour

ATTENDANCE / STEWARDSHIP / Mar 10

Attendance: (Adults 119, Children 24)	143
Operating	\$3,770.00
OCA Assessments	367.00
Uganda Children	50.00
Charities	85.00
Icons	35.00
Maintenance	60.00
Flowers	40.00
Alms	15.00
Alexander Memorial (to Icon Fund)	300.00

ADULT CLASS

Due to a conflict, the Tuesday Evening Adult Class will not meet this week.

COUNCIL MEETING

Thursday, March 21 at 7:00 pm. Please email your Agenda Items to Mark.

CLEVELAND DEANERY COLLECTION

This year the the Collection is being earmarked for St Herman's House. Our Diocese has undertaken to provide funding for two new Greenhouses at their farm which is worked by some of the residents of St Herman's. Each structure costs \$15,000 and Bishop Paul has asked each Deanery to participate in the effort. Please use the envelope in your packet and contribute

generously on Sunday, March 31.

CONFESSION NOTE

Confession is in order for all during the Great Fast,. Please take advantage of the additional times scheduled and approach in a timely manner throughout the season.

PRAYER CORNER + + + + +

Perry (Capitan), Sbdcn Leonard, John (Adam's nephew), Ted Geletka, Nina Stehnach (Fr's frnds), Julian, John Clements, Sarah Crivella, Nancy, (Ruth B's frnd), Joella (Lu D's daughter) Laura (Lu D's sis-n-law), Bradley (Tina C's son), suffering Christians in Ukraine and the Middle East.

Birthdays: Christine Cindric (3/20), Jim Pahoulis (3/22).

Newborns: Mira (David & Maria).

Expecting: Tom & Stephanie, Bobby & Juliana.

Departed: Leonard Soroka (3/10, Fr's friend), Lillian Lussier (2/21, LuAnn D's mom), Eleanor Alexander (2/18, Tom's mom).

Our Seminarian: Deacon Brian Crivella & Family.

Our Missionaries: Peter & Sharon.

Newly Illumined: Nicholas, Maxime.

Grace Upon Grace

by Dcn George Shumaik

The Gospel read at the Divine Liturgy on Great and Holy Pascha is John 1:1-17. His prologue is a creation story, a new Genesis narrative that starts with same introit “In the beginning...” and concludes with “...His fullness we have all received, and grace upon grace. For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.” St. John clearly declares that Jesus delivers God’s grace to us as the embodiment of the final and ultimate truth. “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.” (John 14:6) What then is the nature of this divine grace? That simple question has perplexed theologians for millennia with no consensus among Christian denominations to this day.

Within Orthodoxy even the briefest prayers and exclamations within the Divine Services contain reference to God’s grace. The second petition of the Little Litany is the familiar “Help us; save us; have mercy on us; and keep us, O God, by Your grace.” This entreaty is a concise summary of why we assemble for liturgical worship.

At the inaugural service of Great Lent, Forgiveness Vespers, the Great Prokeminon drawn from Psalm 69 is “Turn not away Your face from Your child for I am afflicted...” We acknowledge our affliction as the disease of sin and because we are broken and unable to heal ourselves, we require a physician. Our physician is a merciful God by whose grace we can be made whole. We extol the grace of God at numerous other times in our ecclesiastical rites. At the Divine Liturgy, the Anaphora begins with the priest’s blessing “The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with all of you.” (2 Corinthians 13:14).

The Orthodox understanding of grace begins with the Holy Trinity. We believe in one God in three persons – Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The essence of the Godhead is a mystery and beyond our comprehension. We can know God only through His energies that deliver His benevolent economy to creation. This divine operation is the nature of grace that like all manifestations of His energies is not something newly created and exists eternally. We are the pinnacles of God’s work and have life in us only because of His will. Because He desired sons and daughters, not slaves or robots, we possess free will.

We were created for communion with God but have chosen to fall away into sin because we seek gratifica-

tion in pursuit of our own desires. We believe that God is continually active in His creation. He has chosen not to turn His face away from our affliction but has sent His Son to deliver us from the wages of sin that is death. In other words – God is “gracious and the lover of mankind”.

The grace of God is always a gift that is unmerited by our actions. In Orthodoxy, the sacraments are understood not merely as the enumerated seven but as the totality of activity within the Church, the Body of Christ. The sacraments are the means of grace in this temporal world. The grace of God is always present and accessible to all. He is at the door knocking (Revelation 3:20) but does not enter by force.

The Orthodox Church holds no doctrine of “irresistible grace”. The relationship between the grace of God and the free will of man is one of cooperation or synergy. Saint Paul declares, “We are fellow-workers with God.” (1 Corinthians 3:9) This is why there is no dichotomy between faith and works in Orthodoxy - they are synergistic. “You will know them by their works.” (Matthew 7:16) “Faith without works is dead.” (James 2:17) Good works are the product of faith, not the progenitor of faith.

We have archetypes of synergy to follow starting with Jesus Himself who prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane “Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done.” (Luke 22:42) We honor His Mother, Mary, and proclaim her as “Theotokos, full of grace!” She is accounted first among the Saints for as a young girl, a virgin; possessing the same humanity as us all, agreed of her own free will to bear the child who would save the world. She said yes to God!

We all received a wedding garment at our Baptism. We have “put on Christ”. We are invited to the banquet of salvation but are not required to attend. We can reject the grace of God or heed the prayer of the Apostle Peter – “Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord, as His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue, by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature...” (2Peter 1:2-4) Grace upon grace, Amen.