



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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Sunday	May 19	<i>4th Sunday of Pacha / Tone 3 / The Paralytic</i> 9:00 am Church School 10:00 am Divine Liturgy / Kucmanic Baptism / Reception
Saturday	May 25	<i>4th Saturday of Pascha</i> NO VESPERS
Sunday	May 26	<i>5th Sunday of Pacha / Tone 4 / Samaritan Woman</i> Readings: Acts 11:19-26, 29-30 John 4:5-42 9:00 am Divine Liturgy / Fr John Adamcio presiding / Coffee Hour

ATTENDANCE / STEWARDSHIP / May 12

Attendance: (Adults 106, Children 31)	137
Operating	\$4,614.00
OCA Assessments	554.00
Uganda Children Charities	50.00
Alms	55.00
Icons	40.00
Maintenance	60.00
Zoe	25.00
	160.00

NEWLY ILLUMINED

We welcome Mira Kucmanic who was Baptized into Christ this morning. May God plant her firmly in His vineyard and bless and keep her for many years!

WEDDING BANNES

Kristen Philip & Cameron Robinson on Sunday, May 26 at 2:30 pm in Columbus.

LITURGY NEXT SUNDAY

Due to the Robinson Wedding, Liturgy will begin at 9:00 am next Sunday, May 26. Fr Andrew will already be in Columbus so please welcome Fr John Adamcio who will serve the Liturgy.

LAST ONE OUT

After Coffee Hour, any remaining social group should designate someone to turn off all lights, lock up and set the alarm. If setting the alarm is intimidating, at least release the locking chains on the two foyer doors (front & back). Thanks.

ALMS DISTRIBUTION

We collected a total of \$3,244. The distribution is as follows: St. James - \$1000, St. Herman's - \$1000, Parish Charities - \$1000 and Zoe (since the last collection was low) - \$244. Blessings to all who contributed to the Lenten Alms.

DESIGNATED SMOKING AREA

The urns are being moved next to the bench in the circle.

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), suffering Christians in the Middle East.

Anniversaries: Calin & Nicoleta Lechintan (5/20), Joe & Pauline Demanski (5/21).

Birthdays: Hope Klinar (5/20), Eric Ray ((5/21).

Newborns: Luna (CJ & Iya), Luka (Bobby & Juliana).

Expecting: Tom & Stephanie.

Our Seminarian: Deacon Brian Crivella & Family.

Our Catechumens: Mike Brzozowski, Ken Hockenberry.

Newly Illumined: Mira & Jude.

Christ is Risen! Indeed He is Risen!

Ninety Percent of Orthodoxy is Just Showing Up

Fr Stephen Freeman

Sometime back, I was asked about “being present.” The question was rooted in the problem of a “wandering mind.” My answer was simple and straight-forward: “You are always present. It comes with having a body.” We speak of the mind “wandering,” and it is a colorful metaphor, but it’s not true. The “mind” hasn’t gone anywhere else, it is simply thinking about something other than where your body is, or, it’s not “thinking” at all. Many times the noise in our head is just an artifact of other things, including our bodies.

If we define “thinking” as a rational, intentional act in which we attend to something (whether physical or mental), then we actually think far less than we imagine ourselves to. When we dream, we do not later imagine ourselves to have been “thinking.” Dreaming is an activity of the brain but it is not thinking. Over the course of the day, much of what goes through our head is closer to dreaming than thinking. There is the noise associated with various emotional reactions. A moment of surprise will occasion a line of “thoughts” [noise]. A moment of embarrassment will do the same. Sheer boredom invites the brain to engage with something – it abhors pure emptiness.

The very process of thought itself is never as simple as the rational, intentional event that we imagine it to be. How we think includes a host of activities. It involves memory, association, imagining, projecting – and many other things. We are not computers. Human thought and the work of a computer have very little in common (despite any hoopla to the contrary).

That said, it is good to recognize the signal importance of our bodies. We are always where our bodies are. This is the reason that the Church gives such attention to what we do with our bodies. St. Paul goes so far as to say that our bodies are Temples. We pray with the body (with bows, prostrations and the sign of the Cross); we fast with the body; all of the sacraments are received through the body. God became flesh, and was held on the Cross by His body. We continue to eat and drink His Body and Blood.

It is with all that in mind that I have said any number of times, “Ninety percent of Orthodoxy is just showing up.” There are important things that happen when we show up, but nothing can happen until we do. This is true of our worship in Church, our prayers at home, our alms to the poor. There are no intentions that replace the simple act of being there.

There are good reasons why we are sometimes not there, such as illness and the like. We also tend to underestimate the value of simply being present. If I perceive no benefit to myself in assembling with others, we cannot begin to measure the value it very likely has to those around. I recall years when I was in the process of starting missions. In each case, twenty people could feel like a “crowd” (sometimes even fewer was great). In the vast array of temptations that face a priest, and others, few are as devastating as the suggestion that what is taking place “is not worth it.” The bloodless sacrifice of the Divine Liturgy is always infinitely “worth” it. Nevertheless, we encourage one another with even our mere presence.

Learning to be “present” is generally no more difficult than learning to be mindful of our bodies. It is therefore of note that our services are as physical as they are. There is movement, the smell of incense, the sight of icons, the lighting and burning of candles and lamps. God has not abandoned us to bare walls of blank abstraction. The strange innovation in the West (both in certain strains of Medieval Catholicism as well as in many forms of later Protestantism) that stripped Churches of their beauty with the explanation that decoration is a distraction, is contrary to the much older tradition in which the display and veneration of icons is seen as an integral part of a prayer life.

When God gave commandments to Israel and told them to bind them to their arms and keep them before their eyes, He did not mean that they should merely keep them uppermost in their thoughts. They literally bound them on their arms and wore them on their foreheads. They set them in their doorposts. These were salutary practices – not superstitions. They are the practices of a people who understand that they were created as embodied people and not as abstractions.

I have a difficult time concentrating on anything for more than a few minutes. I have to back away and do something else and return to finish later. Writing a blog article, for example, is something that takes place in bursts of five or ten minutes off-and-on over the course of a day. Sometimes coming back to the project is painful. Anyone with ADHD will know what I’m describing. My prayers are no different. I pray best in a Liturgy because the activity is itself a prayer. I walk as a prayer. I cense as a prayer. I chant as a prayer. I cross myself and others as a prayer. Oddly, the Psalm says, “Let my prayer arise in Your sight as incense, and the lifting up of my hands be an evening sacrifice.” Sometimes I have to say (inwardly), “Let the incense be my prayer in Your sight, and the lifting up of my hands be an evening sacrifice,” because my thoughts are uncontrollably all over the place. My experience is that such actions draw my mind towards God. Evagrius of Ponticus said, “If you want to humble the soul, humble the body.”

Whoever first imagined that sitting still in a pew and paying attention to something constituted worship was not only wrong, but the creator of torture as an effort towards worship. It was certainly not an idea wrought in the mind of a child. Only an ideologue could imagine such a thing – may the Lord deliver us!

I have one of my grandchildren in the congregation (three-years old). He is like his father who is like me. Out of the corner of my eye on a Sunday, I often see his father carrying him across the Church from one icon to the next. I know what he is doing. He is rightly indulging his son’s need for movement and teaching him to love the ones made present to us in their holy icons. As time moves along, he will acquire an ability to be still (well, a bit more). His father sat patiently through interminable services on Mt. Athos two years ago, which is far more than his father could do!

I delight that they show up – as well as everybody else. Ninety percent of the time, I try to be there as well.