



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

Volume 36

2022

Number 27

Sunday Jul 3 *3rd Sunday after Pentecost / Tone 2 / Martyr Hyacinth*
9:30 am Divine Liturgy Coffee Hour

Saturday Jul 9 *Hieromartyr Pancratius*
NO VESPERS

Sunday Jul 10 *4th Sunday after Pentecost / Tone 3 / Venerable Anthony of the Kievan Caves*
Readings: Rom 6:18-23 Matt 8:5-13
9:30 am Divine Liturgy Coffee Hour

ATTENDANCE / STEWARDSHIP / June 26

Attendance	133
Operating	\$2,143.00
OCA Assessments	8.00
Maintenance	160.00
Charities	30.00
Uganda	55.00

VACATION NOTE

Fr A & Family will be on vacation from July 7-11. Fr Alexander Garklavs will be with us for Liturgy next week. Also, he will cover any emergencies and can be reached at 516-761-8772.

SUMMER CONFESSION

Please plan on approaching for Confession this July and August at our regular time after Saturday Vespers, and Wednesday afternoons from 3:30 - 5:00 pm.

VACATION CHURCH SCHOOL

Mark your calendars for July 25-29 for Vacation Church School. Everyone had a great time last year. An email will be forthcoming this week with more info and a list of needed items for donation.

PRAYER CORNER + + + + +

Perry (Capitan), Julian, John Clements, Sarah Crivella, Joella (LuAnn D's dghtr), Francis James (Anna D's frnd), Paris Santone (Debbie C's nephew), Kristin & Cameron Robinson, Dave Renda, Ron Moore (Collins's dad), Colton (Maryann S's frnd), Joe Blackburn, Anna Como (Renda frnds), Nick Covelli, suffering Christians in Ukraine and the Middle East.

Anniversaries: Tom & Heidi Darrah (7/9).

Birthdays: James Oberhausen (7/6), Alex Visnick (7/7).

Newborns: Maria (Patrick & Katherine).

Newly Illumined: Seraphina.

Newly Departed: Kathy Bilowus (Simerick 6/24) Robert Busch (6/20), Donna Merrick (6/6), Matushka Genevieve Glagolev (6/5).

Finding God Amidst the Noise

by Fr Steven Freeman

If I say one hundred prayers a day in the silence of Katounakia and you say three prayers amidst the tumult of the city and your professional and family obligations, then we are equal. St. Ephraim of Katounakia

I ran across this small quote recently and was struck by its insight and typical Orthodox generosity. The kindness of the saints is among their most encouraging aspects. It also echoes a theme that I frequently meditate on: the hiddenness of the spiritual life.

There is a theme of hiddenness in the teaching of Christ, indeed, across the whole of Scripture. We can see it in the sayings regarding the Kingdom of God in which it is compared to a lost coin or a buried treasure or a pearl of great price. It is something that requires searching out, digging up, or even selling everything in order to have it. The Kingdom of God is something that you don't know but is

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worth everything in order to know. To know it, however, we must ask, seek, and knock.

Much of our life is spent doing something else.

The theme and reality of hiddenness has two sides (or so it seems to me). The first is the side of becoming a seeker. It is the fundamental stance of a pilgrim (rather than a tourist). It has a way of organizing everything around it. For example, one insight that I gained over the years of my education was the central importance of the “question.” When I was in high school, I cannot say that I had any major questions. I thought I had major answers and lived my life accordingly (“teen wisdom”). For two years between high school and college I accumulated more answers, lost them, and began to acquire questions. Those questions, far from refined, gave me an inner burning that fueled certain aspects of my college studies as well as my seminary years that followed. Eight years after seminary, my questions, more refined by eight years of ordained ministry, propelled me into the doctoral program at Duke. The answers that began to mature during that period resulted in my conversion to Orthodoxy a decade later. The trick now is to continue to *nurture* the questions rather than imagining that, having entered Orthodoxy, I found all the answers. Nothing less than the Kingdom of God, embodied and lived, can be the “answer.” I should add that the “answer” is not a matter of more *information*. We are not saved by information.

The second side of hiddenness is found in the answers themselves. The Kingdom of God has this aspect of hiddenness not because of some pernicious desire of God. The hiddenness exists in order to nurture within us the proper disposition of the image of God. We fail to understand that *God Himself seeks, asks, and knocks*. We are the lost coin, the lost sheep, the treasure hidden in the field, the pearl of great price. God leaves everything in order to come among us and “find” us. His commandment to ask, seek, and knock, is similar to the commandment to be like God. It is, I think, what love does.

The great perversion of our consumer life-style is to substitute shopping for seeking. Our passions (traditionally described as: *self-love, gluttony, lust, love of money and greed, sadness, acedia (sloth & dejection or apathy and boredom anger, fear, vainglory, and pride)*) create a counterfeit sense of seeking. The passions

cry out to be fed and and satiated. However, they are disordered (for a variety of reasons) and generally only draw us deeper into a maw of darkness and addiction. We frequently imagine asceticism to be an unusual application in our life. What we imagine to be “self-denial” is, in fact, little more than a proper effort to live a life that is truly conformed to our nature. We cannot seek the true food of the soul until we find the soul’s true hunger.

Finding the soul’s true hunger is as much to say “finding the soul itself.” The soul is not the passions. Neither is it anything we immediately think of. Some would say, “We hunger for Jesus.” That is absolutely true, but the “Jesus of the passions” is often something that is quickly substituted for the truth. Back in the days of the Jesus Freaks, it was not unusual to hear someone say, “I don’t need drugs anymore – I get high on Jesus.” That was delusional and created any number of false paths.

The patriarch, Jacob, in the Old Testament, spent the better part of his life avoiding the true question of his soul. He stole his brother’s birthright and fled his wrath. Though he was the heir of the promise, he sought to find it somewhere else (working for his father-in-law, Laban). It was not until he decided to return home and face his brother, and to face whatever God would have of him, that the “question of his soul” came into focus. The last night before crossing the river and coming before his brother, he was met by an angel (or a manifestation of Christ?). He wrestled with him all night declaring, “I will not let you go until you bless me!” He was “blessed” when the angel withered his thigh. But in the wounding he received a blessing – a new name – that of Israel (“he who wrestled and prevailed”). Jacob did not know that he was Israel until he came face to face with the question: “Will you bless me?”

Jacob wrestled with God. St. Ephraim of Ktounakia wrestled with his “hundred prayers.” We wrestle with whatever the day brings to us, including its “three prayers.” Whatever we do in the course of the day, it is good that we not lose ourselves amidst our distractions. Do the thing that truly matters, the “one thing needful.” We need to speak to God and ask the question. And keep asking, seeking, and knocking, until we find the right question.

God awaits us.