



Weekly Bulletin

St. Nicholas Orthodox Church

A Community of the Orthodox Church in America

Celebrating our 50th Year witnessing to the Apostolic Faith in Lake County

Father Andrew Clements, Pastor

Volume 37

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Sunday	Jul 16	<i>6th Sndy aft Pentecost / Tone 5 / Fathers of the first six Ecumenical Councils</i>		
		9:30 am	Divine Liturgy	Coffee Hour
Saturday	Jul 22	<i>Mary Magdalene</i>		
		5:30 pm	Great Vespers	Confession
Sunday	Jul 23	<i>7th Sndy aft Pentecost / Tone 6 / Martyrs Trophimus, Theophilus & their companions</i>		
		Readings:	Rom 15:1-7	Matt 9:27-35
		2:30 pm	Blankenship Wedding	
		9:30 am	Divine Liturgy	Coffee Hour

ATTENDANCE / STEWARDSHIP / Jul 9

Attendance	122
Operating	\$2,848.00
IOCC	20.00
Charities	155.00
Uganda	230.00

WEDDING BANNS

Ashley Blakenship and Kenneth Hockenberry next Sunday, July 23 at 2:30 pm.

FREE ICONS

The Icons on the square table in the Hall are for the taking.

UGANDA FUNDRAISER

This Tuesday, July 18 from 6:30 - 8:30 pm.

SUMMER CONFESSION

Please be planning to approach for your Summer Confession. Note the special times scheduled in addition to each Saturday after Vespers.

PRAYER CORNER + + + + +

Perry (Capitan), Julian, Sarah Crivella, Joella (LuAnn D's dghtr), Paris Santone (Debbie C's nephew), Anna Como, Barb (Renda frnd), Nick Covelli, David Campbell (Deb's bro), Theresa, Bernice, (Maryann S's frnds), the suffering Christians in Ukraine and the Middle East.

Anniversaries: Ted & Elaine Kisha, Tim & Linda Haligan (7/17).

Birthdays: Joeseeph Chupa (7/16), Tina Rausch, John Sapp, (7/17), George Hasenorhl IV (7/20).

Newborns: Raphael (David & Maria).

Expecting: Peter & Caitlin, Stephen & Rebecca, Maxim & Mindy, Collin & Laiken, Patrick & Elizabeth.

Our Missionary: Scott.

Drag my Soul to Paradise

by Fr Stephen Freeman

A Prayer to Our Lord Jesus Christ

My most merciful and all-merciful God, O Lord Jesus Christ! In Your great love, You came down and became flesh in order to save all. Again, I pray to You, save me by Grace! If You should save me because of my deeds, it would not be a gift, but merely a duty. Truly, You abound in graciousness and are inexpressibly merciful! You have said, O my Christ: "He who believes in me shall live and never see death." If faith in You saves the desperate, behold: I believe! Save me, for You are my God and my Maker. May my faith replace my deeds, O my God, for You will find no deeds to justify me. May my faith be sufficient for all. May it answer for me; may it justify me; may it make me a partaker of Your eternal glory; and may Satan not seize me, O Word, and boast that he has torn me from Your hand and fold. O

Celebrating our 50th Anniversary

Christ my Savior: save me whether I want it or not! Come quickly, hurry, for I perish! You are my God from my mother's womb. Grant, O Lord, that I may now love You as once I loved sin, and that I may labor for You without laziness as once I labored for Satan the deceiver. Even more, I will labor for You, my Lord and God Jesus Christ, all the days of my life, now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen. (From the Morning Prayers)

This is among my favorite prayers and one of the most hopeful. The greater our self-knowledge and understanding, the greater our realization of just how impossible it is to live the spiritual life. There are many who seem to champion the will, certain that with the right motivation (usually threats of punishment) we will do the right thing. After years of reflection, I have come to the conclusion that this notion of the well-behaved will is born from a personality defect and is simply neurotic.

I see this expressed in any number of ways. It comes out in social media with sentiments that people simply need to work harder, or that they should not be coddled or cajoled. Some extol the virtues of dire consequences for failure. It is directed towards children ("what they need is a real good whacking!"), towards the poor, towards the depressed ("make better use of your bootstraps!"), towards the wicked ("without the threat of hell they will not do good!"), and towards ourselves (self-loathing and shame). While it is true that punishment and suffering can bring about a behavioral response, I have rarely seen it bring about an inner change. Punishing me will never make me a better man. Suffering that is willingly embraced is another matter – worthy of a separate article.

What is neurotic, however, is the insistent belief that punitive measures are both necessary and salutary.

I had a coach in high school when I was on the track team. He knew nothing about running. Our entire workout consisted of running while he yelled profanities at us. I did not become a better runner. I quit before the season ended.

Sadly, my coach is a caricature of a ministerial model for some. The laity are harangued and belit-

tled. Canons and such become weapons of imagined discipline. Those who survive rarely become better Christians. If the model is internalized, they can become angry and depressed apostles of this dark method. Our closeness to paradise cannot be measured by outward performance. Paradise resides in the heart.

I hear the heart's cry in the prayer quoted above. The depth of its honesty provokes the hearts of those who read it. It recognizes the truth of our will and echoes St. Paul's observations:

For I know that nothing good dwells within me, that is, in my flesh. I can will what is right, but I cannot do it. For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I do. Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I that do it, but sin which dwells within me. So I find it to be a law that when I want to do right, evil lies close at hand.... Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? (Romans 7:18-21; 24)

There is, I think, an abiding temptation towards Pelagianism (the belief that we can will our own salvation). In Orthodoxy, the teaching of "synergy" often runs in that direction. We indeed "cooperate" with God in our salvation ("cooperate" is the Latinized equivalent of "synergy"). But our cooperation is best illustrated in the prayer above. It is the cry for help from the lips of the helpless. This is not nothing – it is synergistic. But it is not the imagined synergy that some profess. We are saved by our weakness, not by our excellence.

This prayer, I believe, is an example of true spiritual growth and moral maturity. The Elder Sophrony said, "The way up is the way down." It is the presence of true humility.

The prayer says, "Save me whether I want it or not!" In my own Southern way, I have translated this in a different idiom: "Drag my sorry soul into Paradise."

Be merciful and kind. You will not save anyone by being harsh and demanding. When the temptation arises to fix the world (and your closest neighbor), recognize it as sin. Repent. Call out to God to drag you to a better place – whether you want it or not.