The heavens are Yours, the earth also is Yours;
The world and all its fullness, You have founded them. (Ps. 89:11)
And
Awake, awake, put on strength, 0 arm of the LORD! Awake as in the ancient days,
In the generations of old.
Are You not the arm that cut Rahab apart, And wounded the serpent?
Are You not the One who dried up mighty rivers.
For God is my King of old, working salvation in the midst of the earth.
[“dragons” in some translations] who lurked there.
and have dwelled among men. You hallowed the streams of Jordan, sending down
And come to Zion with singing,
With everlasting joy on their heads.
They shall obtain joy and gladness;
Sorrow and sighing shall flee away. (Isa. 51:9-11)

Reading along without a commentary, it would be easy to assume
that Rahab is a country or a ruler. However, it is the name of an ancient chaos
monster. But in the Psalms and Isaiah, this pagan sea
monster is understood to be a symbol of the demonic powers.

This imagery is taken up in the Christian faith in the context of the Baptism of Christ. The Western tradition (Catholic and
Protestant) has long neglected this feast, only giving it attention in the past 50
years or so. In the East, the Baptism of Christ (Theophany) follows Christmas by
12 days, the same day that the West honors the visitation of the Magi. A major reason
for the West’s neglect of this feast, I suspect, is its strangeness to the later
accounts of the sacrament.

His Baptism thus stands as a contradiction to later Western
atonement theories that became popular. Jesus has no sin to be washed away; He
was not endure to behold mankind oppressed by the Devil; but You came and saved

Who is this Lord? And how does one approach such a God?

Christ’s entry into the Jordan
is a hymn of payment, or punishment, but of going into the strongman’s
kingdom, binding him and setting free those who are held captive. The heads of
the dragons are crushed, the heads of levitiation are broken in pieces, Rahab has
been cut apart.

I have seen false comparisons between East and West, where the West is credited
with an emphasis on the Cross and the East with the Resurrection. It is a comparison that only a Westerner would make. Within the East, the Cross and
the Resurrection are not separated—they are a single action devastating the
adversary, leading captivity captive and setting all of the captives free. This is the
Lord’s Passover.

Dragons and Chaos beware.

UPCOMING EVENTS AND SERVICES

--- Church School Today ---
Family Bowling Outing Feb. 11th following Pancake Breakfast in Cambridge Springs. 1-4pm

THIS MONTH—
- Men’s Fellowship Meeting ~ TODAY - following Coffee Hour
- Vespers for St. Anthony The Great ~ Tuesday, Jan 16th 6pm -
With a talk on the Desert Fathers to follow.
- Orthodox Bible Study – Thursday Jan. 18th - 6pm @ The Tarot
- Bean Café- Meadville, PA

- MARCH FOR LIFE – Friday, Jan. 19th – Washington D.C.
- Pan-Orthodox Blessing of Lake Erie – Sat. Jan. 20th 12noon –
- Dobbs Landing – Voodoo Brewery to Follow for lunch
- Altar Servers and Readers Meeting – Sun. Jan. 21st immediately following the kissing of the cross. (Parents should attend)
- Ladies Altar Meeting – Sun. Jan. 21st Following Coffee Hour
- Erie March for Life - Sat. Jan. 27th 11am Perry Square, Erie
- Parish Council Meeting – Wed. Feb. 7th
- GREAT AND HOLY LENT BEGINS Feb. 19th

MISSIONS TEAM

Anyone wishing to serve as a missionary for a summer trip may inquire
Following Coffee Hour

5pm @ The Tarot

Dobbs Landing

--Church School Today--

by Fr. Stephen Freeman

The day is Yours, the night also is Yours:
You have prepared the light and the sun. (Ps. 74:12-16)
For those who are unfamiliar with Pascha and Baptism in an “Eastern key,” this
language can seem quite odd. It is the dominant image of salvation within the
Eastern Church. The great hymn of Pascha, repeated seemingly hundreds of times
in that season, is, “Christ is risen from the dead, trampling down death by death.”
It is not a hymn of payment, or punishment, but of going into the strongman’s
kingdom, binding him and setting free those who are held captive. The heads of
the dragons are crushed, the heads of levitiation are broken in pieces, Rahab has
been cut apart.

I have seen false comparisons between East and West, where the West is credited
with an emphasis on the Cross and the East with the Resurrection. It is a comparison that only a Westerner would make. Within the East, the Cross and
the Resurrection are not separated—they are a single action devastating the
adversary, leading captivity captive and setting all of the captives free. This is the
Lord’s Passover.

Dragons and Chaos beware.

32nd SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST — Tone 7.
Leavetaking of the Theophany. St. Sava I, first
Archbishop of Serbia (1237). The Holy Fathers slain at
Sinaí and Raithu: Isaiah, Sábabs, Moses and his disciple
Moses, Jeremiah, Paul, Adam, Sergius, Domnus, Proculus,
Hypatius, Isaac, Macarius, Mark, Benjamin, Eusebius, Elias,
and others (4th-5th c.). St. Nina (Nino), Equal-to-the-
Apostles and Enlightener of the Georgians (355). St. Joseph
Nilus of Sinai (5th c.). Ven. Stephen, Abbot of Chenelakos
Monastery near Chalcedon (6th c.).

PLEASE INCLUDE THESE OUR BROTHERS AND SISTERS IN YOUR
DAILY PRAYERS; Those in need—Fr. Andrew, Fr. David, Mat. Donna,
Fr. John, Fr. Nicholas, Fr. Paul, Fr. George, Mat. Suzanne, Melissa,
Meghan, Pearl, Karen, John, Mary, Stavros, Marilyn, Theona, Sara,
Eugene, John, Ann, Thomas, Catherine, Timothy, Jeremiah, Renee,
Delani, Emily, The Housebound…Vincent, Tanya, Richard, Helen, John,
Irene, Ruth, Josephine, Levitiation…Travelers, Bankos …Catechumens – Rick and Christian Our Missionaries Abroad…Fr.
David and Mr. Rozanine, Military servers…Greg …Departed
Orthodox…Newly Departed – Ann, Katherine, Vernon, Paul, James,
Andrew, Peter, Paul, Margaret, Michael Mary Ann, Timothy special
requests…Anthony, Ian, Paul, Daleen, Penni, James, Sean, Liam, Susan,
James, Joel, Jen, Roger, Jasmine, Cassandra ….
v: The voice of the Lord is upon the waters; the God of glory thunders, the Lord upon many waters. (Ps 28:3)

Tone 7

v: It is good to give thanks to the Lord, to sing praises to Thy Name, O Most High. (Ps 91/92:1)

Today's Scripture Readings:

1 Timothy 1:15-17 (Epistle)

This is a faith saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief. However, for this reason I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show all longsuffering, as a pattern to those who are going to believe on Him for everlasting life. Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, to God who alone is wise, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.

Luke 18:35-43 (Gospel)

Then it happened, as He was coming near Jericho, that a certain blind man sat by the road begging. And hearing a multitude passing by, he asked what it meant. So they told him that Jesus of Nazareth was passing by. And he cried out, saying, “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!” Then those who went before warned him that he should be quiet; but he cried out all the more, “Son of David, have mercy on me!” So Jesus stood still and commanded him to be brought to Him. And when he had come near, He asked him, saying, “What do you want Me to do for you?” He said, “Lord, that I may receive my sight.” Then Jesus said to him, “Receive your sight; your faith has made you well.” And immediately he received his sight, and followed Him, glorifying God. And all the people, when they saw it, gave praise to God.

When Chaos RULED the World Part 1

In the ancient civilizations of the Near East there were strange stories about the place of chaos in the beginning of all things – and the chaos is specifically located in water. It seems odd to me that people who largely lived in arid countries should imagine the world beginning as a watery chaos – but that is certainly what they did.

The Egyptians imagined the world’s beginning as a watery chaos (the god, Nun). It is from this watery thing that the god, Atum, generates himself and then creates the other gods. The Babylonian creation story, the Enuma Elish, said that before there were any other gods, and before the heaven and earth were set in place, there were only Apsu (the freshwater ocean) and Tiamat (the saltwater ocean). The god Marduk slayed Tiamat (who was also a chaos creature) and from her created the heavens and the earth.

All of this, of course, seems quite foreign to the faith of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. It is a sample, however, of the cultures in the midst of which their faith was revealed. It also provides a backdrop that shows how unique and striking the creation story in Genesis truly is.

There are echoes of these cosmic battles embedded in various places in the Scriptures:

And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. Hidden from our modern eyes but visible in the Hebrew is the “Tiamat” monster. It is within the word for “without form” (tohu) and “deep” (tehom). But in our Hebrew account, there is no slaying of a monster, no polytheistic struggle. Rather, there is God (Elohim) who simply speaks, and accomplishes the creation. There is a watery chaos, now raised up into a theological account of extreme sophistication. It is a repudiation of the surrounding culture-myths – but it is still rendered in a language that knows that culture.

In St. John’s gospel, there is something similar. He opens with reference to the Logos, a concept completely familiar to earlier Greek philosophy. But where philosophy sees an abstraction, St. John proclaims the particular: this Logos “became flesh and dwelt among us.” He takes the language and ideas of a surrounding culture and transforms them into the stuff of true revelation. In many ways, this is rendered in very much a part of the incarnation. Every year around Christmas time, we begin to hear noises about Christmas trees having “pagan origins.” And there are many who rush to the defense of the poor trees. I yawn. My ancestors worshipped trees, and I daresay their later Christian descendants were glad to see the Church baptizing the trees as well as people. There simply is no “pristine” matter from which the faith starts fresh. God always speaks and reveals Himself in terms that can be assimilated. He does not destroy culture, but fulfills it. The Christmas tree is a stark reminder that the Child born on that day has a rendezvous with a Tree, and that there is no getting around it. There is a Tree at the heart of our faith, even as there was at the heart of the Garden.

CS Lewis once opined that pagan mythology consisted of “good dreams sent by God to prepare for the coming of Christ.” Such myths can carry deep darkness and confusion – but such is the nature of a world that is broken. God does not offer us redemption by destroying a broken world. He does not erase or eradicate the cultures of mankind. It is only a darkened theology that imagines every production of the human imagination to be worthy only of the dung heap. That sort of destructive view belongs to the scions of Calvin and the iconoclasm of Wahhabis: it is not the work of God.

The Egyptian and Mesopotamian images that found their way into the Scriptures reflect an instinct about a primal struggle. Order and well-being are not given; they are the result of an intervention. Both the Psalms and Isaiah take some of these images up into poetic praise:

O LORD God of hosts, Who is mighty like You, O LORD? Your faithfulness also surrounds You. You rule the raging of the sea; When its waves rise, You still them. You have broken Rahab in pieces, as one who is slain;