

the teaching of the faith. We rarely actually engage our will, substituting, instead, the passions of consumption.

When I consider the reality of our lives, I think of St. Paul's cry for help, "Who will deliver me from this body of death?" And I take comfort in the single moments.

The story of the Old Woman and the Onion is a parable stated in the extreme manner of absurdity. I was first drawn to it by the simple fact of its willingness to ascribe such mercy to God. A single, rotten onion, given as charity would be sufficient to get you out of hell! It was the imaginative force of such a thing that shook my soul when I first read it. In my childhood, there could never have been such a Christian mercy. Hell is hell is hell.

I have also had the unfortunate experience of meeting "Mrs. Grumbles," or various versions of her. These are personalities that have almost disappeared behind a consuming passion or fixation (a memory, an injury). There is a deep sense that their freedom could come if but for a moment they could set aside this besetting thing.

But I have seen, more than once, the favorable outcome of a soul whose deepest hunger has, in an unguarded moment, been exposed to the light of the gospel. I know the case of a woman who found God when a priest called her by name unexpectedly. Just her name. The mercy of God is wonderfully opportunistic. I have often thought, "Give Him an inch and He'll take your life!"

However, we generally labor along in the struggles of the life of faith, unaware of such moments, with a sense that it is hard, even wondering if God is involved at all. We are like the Elder Brother of the Prodigal Son. The younger, foolish son seems to have found an amazing moment, filled with hugs, rings, robes and fatted calves. The Elder Brother felt he had received nothing. But in that moment, he is told, "All that I have is yours."

The moment ("all that I have") is so large and continuous, it is overlooked. On a cloudless day, the sky ceases to interest us. But we breathe it, swim in it – as it nurtures the life of everything around us.

I ran across a sermon of Fr. Pavel Florensky (who died in Stalin's Camps). This small quote underlines the beauty of what lies within, and perhaps suggests how it is that God treasures even a single moment:

Oh brothers, if you could only realise how beautiful you all are! Does not the priest swing the censer to the Holy Spirit Who lives in you, when he turns to you with the incense? Is it not the altar of the internal temple that he envelops with clouds of incense? And is not man – also the self-same ikon of God? For, as in the ikon beyond the paints and the wood, the grace of the Lord is present, so behind the flesh of man, beyond it and the sinful soul, dwells in the innermost temple, in the many-eyed conscience – the Holy Spirit. –Fr. Stephen Freeman

UPCOMING SERVICES AND EVENTS

+Today: Mary and Melissa Baldwin would like you to pray with them at the Panahidka for Vern Baldwin immediately following Divine Liturgy with a lunch to follow in the hall.

+May Vern's Memory be Eternal!+

+Church School today

+Memorial Saturday Divine Liturgy – May 26th 9:30am (Leavetaking of Ascension) Great Vespers Fri. 6pm

+Missions Team Clean up day – Wed. May 23rd 4pm- 7:30pm with Daily Vespers and a meal to follow.

+Pentecost May 27th

+Saturday Breakfast Buffet –9am-1pm Starting June 2nd (raising funds for IOCC – Syrian Children's Relief)

**+Our Patronal Feast June 28th- 29th –
6:00pm Great Vespers on Thursday Night
Friday: 9:00am- Hours
9:30 am Divine Liturgy
2:00pm – Holy Anointing Service
4:00-4:30 Children's Games
5:00- 6:00 Pot Luck Dinner
7:00-8:30 Bond Fire**

+Annual Chicken BBQ – Sunday, July 15th

+Please sign up to help with Coffee Hour- see Isaac Bicko or Anna Rachocki.

MISSIONS TEAM

~ On May 23rd the team will sponsor a parish yard clean and beautify from 4-5:30 with Daily Vespers and a dinner for all following.

~~ **During the Month of June the team will be collecting items for IOCC kits for children. Items to be collected will be announced.**

~Next Meeting to be held on Friday, June 22nd at the Rachocki Homestead please bring a dish to pass, starting at 5:30pm.

"Rejoice" scripture verse for the week

Philippians 4:4- 9: Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice! Let your gentleness be known to all men. The Lord *is* at hand. Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

Saints Peter and Paul Orthodox Church

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Rev. Fr. Daniel Mathewson – *Rector* **Lord's Day – May 20th , 2018** Parish phone: 814-734-3801 Find us on the Web at:

www.orthodoxcrossingville.org

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CHRIST HAS ASCENDED INTO GLORY!

AND WE WITH HIM!

7th SUNDAY OF PASCHA — Tone 6. Holy Fathers of the First Ecumenical Council. Afterfeast of Ascension. Martyr Thalelæus at Aegæ in Cilicia, and his companions, Martyrs Alexander and Asterius (ca. 284). Uncovering of the Relics of St. Aleksy, Metropolitan of Moscow and Wonderworker of All Russia (1431). Rt. Blv. Prince St. Dovmont (Timothy), Prince of Pskov (1299). Martyr Asclas of Egypt (ca. 287). Ven. Zabulon (Zebulon) and Sosanna (Susanna), parents of St. Nino, Enlightener of Georgia (1996).

PLEASE INCLUDE THESE OUR BROTHERS AND SISTERS IN YOUR DAILY PRAYERS: Newly Illumined- Beginning after Pentecost there will be prayer request sheet for names, The Homebound...., Tanya, Richard, Helen, , Irene, Ruth, Josephine, William, Claudia... Travelers.. ...Catechumens –Christian ...Our Missionaries Abroad...Fr. David and Mt. Rozanne, Military servers...Greg ...Departed Orthodox...Newly Departed – Catherine Kirzmanich John Bicko, John Sekel, Ann, Katherine. Vernon, Paul, James, Andrew, Peter, Paul, Margaret, Michael Mary Ann, Timothy... Special requests...

Today's Hymns Tone 6 Troparion (*Resurrection*)

The Angelic Powers were at Thy tomb;

the guards became as dead men.

Mary stood by Thy grave, seeking Thy most pure body.

Thou didst capture hell not being tempted by it.

Thou didst come to the Virgin, granting life.//

O Lord, Who didst rise from the dead, glory to Thee.

Tone 4 Troparion (*Ascension*)

Thou hast ascended in glory, O Christ our God,

granting joy to Thy Disciples by the promise of the Holy Spirit.

Through the blessing they were assured,

**that Thou art the Son of God,//
the Redeemer of the world!**

Tone 8 Troparion (Fathers)

**Thou art most glorious, O Christ our God,
Who hast established the Holy Fathers as lights on the earth.
Through them Thou hast guided us to the true Faith://
O greatly compassionate One, glory to Thee!**

Tone 8 Kontakion (Fathers)

**The Apostles' preaching and the Fathers' doctrines have established
one Faith for the Church.**

**Adorned with the robe of truth, woven from heavenly theology://
It defines and glorifies the great mystery of piety.**

Tone 6 Kontakion (Ascension)

**When Thou hadst fulfilled the dispensation for our sake
and united earth to heaven,
Thou didst ascend in glory, O Christ our God,
not being parted from those who love Thee,
but remaining with them and crying://**

“I am with you, and there is no one against you!”

Tone 4 Prokeimenon (Song of the Three Children)

**Blessed art Thou, O Lord God of our fathers, and praised and
glorified is Thy name forever! (Song of the three Holy Children, v. 3)
v: For Thou art just in all that Thou hast done for us! (v. 4)**

Tone 1

Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia!

**v: The Lord, the God of gods, speaks and summons the earth from the
rising of the sun to its setting. (Ps 49/50:1)**

**v: Gather to Me My venerable ones, who made a covenant with Me by
sacrifice! (Ps 49/50:5)**

Today's Scripture Readings:

Acts 20:16-18, 28-36 (Epistle)

For Paul had decided to sail past Ephesus, so that he would not have to spend time in Asia; for he was hurrying to be at Jerusalem, if possible, on the Day of Pentecost. From Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called for the elders of the church.

And when they had come to him, he said to them: “You know, from the first day that I came to Asia, in what manner I always lived among you, Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves. Therefore watch, and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears. So now, brethren, I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and

give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified. I have coveted no one's silver or gold or apparel. Yes, you yourselves know that these hands have provided for my necessities, and for those who were with me. I have shown you in every way, by laboring like this, that you must support the weak. And remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He said, ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’” And when he had said these things, he knelt down and prayed with them all.

John 17:1-13 (Gospel)

Jesus spoke these words, lifted up His eyes to heaven, and said: “Father, the hour has come. Glorify Your Son, that Your Son also may glorify You, as You have given Him authority over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as You have given Him. And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent. I have glorified You on the earth. I have finished the work which You have given Me to do. And now, O Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was. I have manifested Your name to the men whom You have given Me out of the world. They were Yours, You gave them to Me, and they have kept Your word. Now they have known that all things which You have given Me are from You. For I have given to them the words which You have given Me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came forth from You; and they have believed that You sent Me. I pray for them. I do not pray for the world but for those whom You have given Me, for they are Yours. And all Mine are Yours, and Yours are Mine, and I am glorified in them. Now I am no longer in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to You. Holy Father, keep through Your name those whom You have given Me, that they may be one as We are. While I was with them in the world, I kept them in Your name. Those whom You gave Me I have kept; and none of them is lost except the son of perdition, that the Scripture might be fulfilled. But now I come to You, and these things I speak in the world, that they may have My joy fulfilled in themselves.

A Single Moment

Grushenka, a character in Dostoevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov*, relates a now-famous fable about an old woman:

Once upon a time there was a woman, and she was wicked as wicked could be, and she died. And not one good deed was left behind her. The devils took her and threw her into the lake of fire. And her guardian angel stood thinking: what good deed of hers can I remember to tell God? Then he remembered and said to God: once she pulled up an onion and gave it to a beggar woman. And God answered: now take that same onion, hold it out to her in the lake, let her take hold of it, and pull, and if you pull her out of the lake, she can go to paradise, but if the onion

breaks, she can stay where she is. The angel ran to the woman and held out the onion to her: here, woman, he said, take hold of it and I'll pull. And he began pulling carefully, and had almost pulled her all the way out, when other sinners in the lake saw her being pulled out and all began holding on to her so as to be pulled out with her. But the woman was wicked as wicked could be, and she began to kick them with her feet: 'It's me who's getting pulled out, not you; it's my onion, not yours.' No sooner did she say it than the onion broke. And the woman fell back into the lake and is burning there to this day. And the angel wept and went away.

It reminds me of a small scene in CS Lewis' *The Great Divorce*. Angels are trying to help a soul make the journey from hell to heaven. One, a woman, seems mostly to be a grumbler. Lewis' soul has this conversation with his own guide:

'I am troubled, Sir,' said I, 'because that unhappy creature doesn't seem to me to be the sort of soul that ought to be even in danger of damnation. She isn't wicked: she's only a silly, garrulous old woman who has got into a habit of grumbling, and feels that a little kindness, and rest, and change would due her all right.' 'That is what she once was. That is maybe what she still is. If so, she certainly will be cured. But the whole question is whether she is now a grumbler.' 'I should have thought there was no doubt about that!' 'Aye, but ye misunderstand me. The question is whether she is a grumbler, or only a grumble. If there is a real woman— even the least trace of one— still there inside the grumbling, it can be brought to life again. If there's one wee spark under all those ashes, we'll blow it till the whole pile is red and clear. But if there's nothing but ashes we'll not go on blowing them in our own eyes forever. They must be swept up.'

Both stories have in common a tiny, insignificant thing: an onion, a grumble. There is in Scripture a similar “tiny thing,” a single moment that serves as a hinge in a human life. The exchange between the “Good Thief” and Christ on the Cross is hymned during Holy Week with the words, “The Wise Thief entered Paradise in a single moment...” It is a remembrance of the extreme measure of God's grace.

The human life can be terribly complicated. We rarely make decisions that are straightforward. We are filled with contradictions. The gospel is frequently presented as a matter of choice and decision, a very dangerous categorization in a consumerist culture. We are the subjects of massive propaganda and advertising, the goal of which is to guide our consumption, not only of goods and services but of ideas and allegiances. In a world that celebrates freedom, we are made the subjects of marketing so all-pervasive that freedom itself is suppressed and distorted. Worse than this, I think, is the fact that our culture nurtures the “character” of consumption within the soul. We think and reason as consumers and “decide” in that