



# Saints Peter and Paul

## Orthodox Church

25636 N. Mosiertown Rd Crossingville, PA 1641

Archpriest Fr. Daniel Mathewson – Rector

V. Rev. David Smoley – Retired

### Lord's Day – 8-30-2020

Parish phone: 814-734-3801 Find us on the Web at:

[www.orthodoxcrossingville.org](http://www.orthodoxcrossingville.org)

12th SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST — Tone

**3. Translation of the Relics of Rt. Blv. Great Prince St. Alexander Nevsky(1724).** Sts. Alexander (340), John (595), and Paul the New (784), Patriarchs of Constantinople. Repose of Ven. Alexander, Abbot of Svir (1533). Uncovering of the Relics of St. Daniel, Prince of Moscow (1652). St. Christopher of Palestine (6th c.). St. Fantinus of Calabria (9th c.). Synaxis of the Serbian Hierarchs: Ss. Sava I (1237), Arsenius I (1266), Sava II (1269), Eustathius I (ca. 1285), James (1292), Nikodemus (1325), and Daniel (1338), Archbishops; Joannicus II (1354), Spyridon (1388), Ephraim II (after 1395), Macarius (1574), Gabriel I (1659), Patriarchs; and Gregory, Bishop.

Glory to Jesus Christ!

Pray with out ceasing...

**PLEASE INCLUDE THESE OUR BROTHERS AND SISTERS IN YOUR DAILY PRAYERS:** Those in need -Fr. Patrick, Fr. Andrew, Fr. Isaac, Fr. David, Fr. Anthony, Fr. Joseph, Mat. Gail, Mat. Donna, Mat. Pirsilla, Megan, George, Valerie R., Alice, Margaret, Charlotte, Cayllin, Mary G., Melissa, Debra, Eliza, Pearl, William, Karen, John, Nickolas, Timothy, Amanda, Damian, Delani, Jeremiah, Christine, Rick, Samuel, Timothy M., Andrew, Kati, Simeon, Megan, Andrew, Margret-Ann, Lorelly, Evan, Valentina The Homebound Ann, Tanya, Richard, Ruth, Lillian (Bernice) Catechumen- Christian... Military servers...Greg ...Newly Departed : David Witten, Fr. Paul Lasar, William Suschek, Claudia Sukul, Theona Sekel, Helen Miller, ...Departed Orthodox -Mat. Anastasia, Jeff, Catherine, Marilyn, Rodney, Irene, John B., John S., Ann, Katherine, Vernon, Paul, James Nickolai, Andrew, Peter, Paul, Margaret, Michael Mary Ann, Timothy... Special requests... Paul, Gilbert, Phyllis, Anthony, Ian, Paul, James, Sean, Liam, Bill, Wesley, Kim, Jim, Margaret, Loren, Russell, Julia, Shelby, Janet, Lynn, Margret. Helen, Dan, Jonathan, Donna, Nicholas, Maya, Eric, Mia

### Holy Hymns:

#### **Tone 3 Troparion (Resurrection)**

Let the heavens rejoice! Let the earth be glad!  
For the Lord has shown strength with His arm.  
He has trampled down death by death.  
He has become the first born of the dead.  
He has delivered us from the depths of hell,  
and has granted to the world// great mercy.

#### **Tone 2 Troparion (Forerunner)**

The memory of the righteous is celebrated with hymns of praise, but the Lord's testimony is sufficient for you, O Forerunner. You were shown in truth to be the most honorable of the Prophets, for you were deemed worthy to baptize in the steams of the Jordan Him Whom they foretold. Therefore, having suffered for the truth with joy, you proclaimed to those in hell God Who appeared in the flesh, Who takes away the sin of the world// and grants us great mercy.

#### **Tone 4 Troparion (SS. Alexander, John, and Paul)**

O God of our Fathers, always act with kindness towards us; take not Your mercy from us, but guide our lives in peace// through the prayers of the Patriarchs Alexander, John, and Paul!

#### **Tone 3 Kontakion (Resurrection)**

On this day You rose from the tomb, O Merciful One, leading us from the gates of death.  
On this day Adam exults as Eve rejoices;  
with the Prophets and Patriarchs//  
they unceasingly praise the divine majesty of Your power.

#### **Tone 5 Kontakion (Forerunner)**

The glorious beheading of the Forerunner became an act of divine dispensation,  
for he preached to those in hell the coming of the Savior.  
Let Herodias lament, for she entreated lawless murder,  
loving not the Law of God, nor eternal life,//  
but that which is false and temporal.

#### **Tone 8 Kontakion (SS. Alexander, John, and Paul)**

Set a flame by the love of Christ, O glorious ones,  
you took up the yoke of His precious Cross, revealing  
yourselves as followers in His footsteps by your way of life,  
and you became partakers of His divine glory, divinely-wise  
Alexander, with wonderful John and glorious Paul.  
As you stand before His throne, earnestly pray for our souls!

#### **Tone 3 Prokeimenon (Resurrection)**

Sing praises to our God, sing praises! / Sing praises to our King, sing praises! (*Ps 46/47:6*)  
*v: Clap your hands, all peoples! Shout to God with loud songs of joy! (Ps 46/47:1)*

#### **Tone 3**

Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia!  
*v: In You, O Lord, have I hoped; let me never be put to shame! (Ps 30/31:1)*  
*v: Be a God of protection for me, a house of refuge in order to save me! (Ps 30/31:2)*

### **Holy Scripture:**

#### **1 Corinthians 15:1-11 (Epistle)**

Moreover, brethren, I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received and in which you stand, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast that word which I preached to you - unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures, and that He was seen by Cephas, then by the twelve. After that He was seen by over five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain to the present, but some have fallen asleep. After that He was seen by James, then by all the apostles. Then last of all He was seen by me also, as by one born out of due time. For I am the least of the apostles, who am not worthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me. Therefore, whether it was I or they, so we preach and so you believed.

#### **Matthew 19:16-26 (Gospel)**

Now behold, one came and said to Him, "Good Teacher, what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?" So He said to him, "Why do you call Me good? No one is good but One, that is, God. But if you want to enter into life, keep the commandments." He said to Him, "Which ones?" Jesus said, "You shall not murder, 'You shall not commit adultery,' 'You shall not steal,' 'You shall not bear false witness,' 'Honor your father and your mother,' and, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'" The young man said to Him, "All these things I have kept from my youth. What do I still lack?" Jesus said to him, "If you want to be perfect, go, sell what you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me." But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.  
Then Jesus said to His disciples, "Assuredly, I say to you that it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. And again I say to you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God. When His disciples heard it, they were greatly astonished, saying, "Who then can be saved?" But Jesus looked at them and said to them, "With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible."

## Services and Announcements:

This week...

Sun. Aug. 30<sup>th</sup> – **Atrium 1-2 - parish education begins.**

Adult class – Study of the Holy Prophets

Sat. Sept. 5<sup>th</sup> Great Vespers – 6pm

Sun. Divine Liturgy – 9:30am Hours 9:15

Tues. Sept. 7<sup>th</sup> Vigil – 6pm

Wed. Sept. 8<sup>th</sup> – Nativity of the Theotokos – 9:30am

Sun. Sept. 13<sup>th</sup> – **Archbishop Melchisedek visit** – 9am

-Vigil for the Feast- 6pm

Mon. Sept. 14<sup>th</sup> – Celebration of the Elevation of the Holy Cross- 9:30 am

### It's A Double Wedding!!

On September 6<sup>th</sup>, 2020 at 2:00pm

Fr. Daniel And Mat. Gail announce that...

**Jesse Mathewson will wed Grace Vorisek**

**and**

**Olivia Mathewson will wed Preston Snyder**

**at our parish.**

**Please RSVP Grace or Olivia by Today, if you**

**are attending.**

### To The Church of Sardis: Living with the Spiritually Dead

*"To the angel of the Church of Sardis write: 'These things says the One Who has the seven spirits of God and the seven stars: I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead'" (Rev. 3:1).*

In his monumental commentary on the book of Revelation, Archimandrite Athanasios makes clear that "angel" refers to the bishop, the shepherd of the church being addressed.

Typically, seven is a Biblical number for completeness, totality. Archimandrite Athanasios comments, "Saint Andrew of Caesarea says, 'With the number seven what is meant is the totality of all the Churches.' As the seven days of the week are a symbol of the creation of the world, or our life, the number seven of the seven churches shows the fullness of the Church."

It is the Lord Jesus Christ Who gives the Holy Spirit. "He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water. But He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive" (Jn. 7:38-39). And again the Lord clearly says, "The Helper (Spirit) ... I will send Him to you." (Jn. 16:7ff).

The Lord has no words positive words for the bishop of Sardis. From the very start of the letter He declares him to be lacking in the ways of the Spirit and therefore spiritually dead. "He declares the bishop spiritually dead. In essence, He is saying to him, I am the One who gives of the Holy Spirit; why are you staying spiritually dead? Why aren't you benefiting from the presence of the Holy Spirit so that you and your church can exercise the spiritual life?" (Archimandrite Athanasios).

I have stressed it in the past and will again, the Lord does not say I know your theology, but I know your works. It is quite possible that the bishop in Sardis spoke correct theology but his works, his actions, were not that of truth. Thus he is heavily rebuked by the Lord. Right faith, theology, is always expressed in right works or praxis, the two are an integral whole. The bishop had a reputation of "being alive" while in fact he was on spiritual life support, quickly losing all spiritual vitality. The Lord is the discernor of the heart and of the true intent of men. Spiritual death, apostasy, may be manifest in someone who is still physically "in" the Church.

"I know your works, you have a name that you live spiritually, but you are really dead. What a terrifying statement! This verse should terrify all of us. Each one of us must take a close look at ourselves" (Archimandrite Athanasios).

This is written to the early Church, to Orthodox Christians. It is clear, we, as Christians, may hold to but a philosophy of Christianity and not have the living grace of the Spirit in our lives. The whole goal of the Christian life is the acquisition of the Holy Spirit. To be transformed into the likeness of God Himself. If we as Christians seek to uphold only an institutional external of Orthodoxy, then we are simply building white washed tombs. My we examine our hearts.

Elder Athanasios speaks these sobering words to us, "When a person does not live the true Gospel, but limits Christianity to some external forms by merely going through the motions, then he is a superficial Christian. In his actions he has denied the power of the Holy Spirit. When a man denies the power of the Holy Spirit, he is spiritually dead ... (True) Theology, the knowledge of God, must reach into the last corner of my being, it must feed me, it must give me drink, it must satisfy my spiritual thirst. That is the purpose of theology; to quench my thirst, to satisfy my spiritual hunger, to make me god-like, a Christ-like being. These days we have limited the knowledge of God to retreats, class discussions, and dialogues. We have become, as St. Paul says, conversationalists of this age (1 Cor. 1:20). Theology has been reduced to conversations and discussions, not faith and life."

Thus, is it surprising that even within the "realm" of Orthodoxy the clear boarders and marks set by the Holy Fathers are being challenged and questioned? And not only in words but in actions too.

In our weak times we should fear, in a Godly manner, all the more this insidious spiritual death. Most of all because as moderns we are taught from childhood to thrive in the external, the material plane of existence. We are taught to compartmentalize our lives, here is the "spiritual" and here is the "worldly," the practical everyday reality. And sadly the "practical" becomes a primary driving force for many, and from such a mind set some are more than willing to sacrifice the spiritual for the material and its well-being and preservation.

What is the cure offered by Christ the Lord? "Keep on becoming watchful and make firm the things that remain which are about to die. For I have found no work of thine which have been made complete

before God. Be mindful therefore how thou hast received and heard and be holding fast and repent" (Rev. 3:2-3a).

Arise O sleeper! Awake! The things that remain are the last few works, holding on like a few last grapes on a withering vine. "Thus, because the works had not been found complete before God, it was foretold that those which remained, even such as had been done, were about to die," teaches St. Gregory the Theologian.

The call to watchfulness is constant in the Scripture and the writings of the Saints. Why? Because we can lose that which we have through neglect, slothfulness, and worldliness. We may remain physically in the Church while being spiritually outside of Her. This is, it seems, a worse state than even being a complete unbeliever. Woe to us if we compromise the Faith for the sake of praise and expedience from the world.

Yet, if we wake up and find that we are about dead, then we must repent. We must strengthen that which remains. That is we must hold fast to the clear teachings of the Eternal Faith. Archimandrite Athanasios sees in this passage the fact that the bishop was totally failing in his true pastoral vocation. He was not properly guiding and guarding his flock against the spirit of the times. The Elder then goes on to make an application that is of the utmost importance for our times, "When we attempt to make Christianity heal the social ills of poverty, racial discrimination, etc., and we are not at all concerned about the matter of sin we transfer the Kingdom of God to earth. Thus, by totally ignoring heaven we have secularized in its fullness, a Christianity of this age. The true purpose of Christianity is repentance for sin, and the return to God. The primary purpose of the Church is not to rectify social evils. That is its secondary purpose. The main purpose of the Church is to heal people from sin and to prepare them for the Kingdom of God because we do not have a permanent home here."

The primary work of the Church is not the preservation of physical well-being (and that is not to say it is neglected, I'm speaking of what is primary). Whenever in the name of the Church physical and worldly well-being becomes the primary goal and focus, then the believer must understand, this reveals a spiritual death, one of which the Lord warns His Church in this passage.

The Elder continues, "The Kingdom of God is not a social system or a specific political party. The Kingdom of God is man's rebirth, his renewal in Christ Jesus. This is the Kingdom of God ... This is the essence of Christianity. Now, if the Christians who see injustice around them feel compelled to help their fellow human beings in every possible way ... all these things are a consequence of the work of salvation. However, these elements are not the main purpose of Christianity. Christ did not come to institute justice on earth in the sense that the various social systems wish to have justice."

In her unshakable essential reality the Church is never corrupted by the world. Yet, it is possible that the institutional side may become simply a member of this world system. By doing so it makes itself dead and devoid of the Spirit, as Christ warns.

As Christians we are constantly called to be mindful, to remember the Revelation of Faith, that which we have received. This means it is not "ours" in the ultimate sense, rather we are called to be the faithful custodians of Truth. But Truth is of God. To preserve ourselves from the danger of spiritual death we must guard well the living Faith that we have received. In so doing, we are given life. When the Truth of the Faith energizes in us and we hold it fast, then we are moving toward life, not death. If we are willing to compromise the Faith, sometimes under even under what seem to be "legitimate" reasons, then we are compromising with death itself.

Repent. That is, turn the orientation of your life towards the Son of Righteousness. Govern all things in the Light of Eternity.

"If thou dost not watch, I will come upon thee as a thief, and in no wise shalt thou know what hour I will come upon thee" (Rev. 3:3b).

The very sober warning is this – a Christian, if he allows himself to grow spiritually dead, will be in danger of being cast out of the Kingdom of God.

Elder Athanasios does seem to indicate that this specific warning is in some way directed more to the shepherds of the Church of Christ. I'm a priest and thus must include myself, and these words of his my heart must also harken to first and foremost, "How many of the priests and bishops today would fall under the same category as the bishop of Sardis? The Lord would admonish such bishops and priests with the same words. How many would He call dead? This is a sign of the times, my friends. Hold fast as best you can, any way you can, hold on."

The Elder echoes these words of St. Dimity of Rostov, "We seek Christ amid the ministers of the sacred ranks. Where else would Christ be but in His ministers, amidst those who bear His image? But one hardly finds Christ in them. Practically all of them care only about themselves, they desire good for themselves and not the benefit of the people, they tend themselves and not Christ's flock ... Some priests even serve the sheep of Christ to their own detriment and destruction; they not only fail to build up the flock but even become stumbling blocks for the people. Some have removed the key of knowledge, and they neither enter themselves nor do they allow those following to enter in (cf. Matt. 23:13). While others have never even received the key of knowledge, they are unfit for their calling; not only are such ones unable to lead the sheep entrusted to them unto salvation, they do not even know the path themselves. They are the blind leading the blind, and both will fall into a pit (cf. Matt. 15:14)."

Both of these holy men indicate, as does this Scripture passage, that shepherds may fall into apostasy. No one is bound to follow shepherds into spiritual death. For the spiritually dead Christ comes like a thief (see also Matt. 24:42ff; 1 Thess. 5:2-4; Rev. 16:15). "He appears as a thief for those who do not believe in Him, for those who do not expect Him," instructs Archimandrite Athanasios. Any who make of the Church a kingdom of this world have ceased to live in expectation of the Heavenly King.

Yet, in Sardis, even though the clergy had fallen into spiritual death, there were those who had, by God's grace, held fast to the Faith.

"But thou hast a few names in Sardis who did not defile their garments, and they shall walk with Me in white, for they are worthy" (Rev. 3:4).

The Lord considers the apostasy of the clergy to be defilement. Notice that it is only a few who did not participate in spiritual death, what might be called a remnant. Those few that did not follow their shepherds into spiritual death are given the promise of walking with the Lord Himself in white. White symbolizes the purity of their faith, the fact that they held fast to the Truth while apostasy surrounded them.

What is the recommendation of Elder Athanasios to those who may find themselves in a similar position? "Do not stand still if you see that we (shepherds) are not concerned with your spiritual needs or are not good shepherds. Take care to guide yourselves, educate yourselves as best you can. You will be accountable. The absence of good local shepherds cannot always exonerate you."

Thus, every Christian is responsible before Christ Himself to uphold the Faith, to the best of his strength, in its purity. And no one will be excused for compromising the Faith.

To those who do so, even if feebly, the Lord promises, "The one overcoming in this manner shall clothe himself in white garments, and in no wise will I blot his name out from the book of life; and I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels. To the one who hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the Churches" (Rev. 3:5-6).

By Fr. Jeremiah Lynch