

There are two things that particularly come to mind when contemplating God's Providence. They are "faith," and "thanksgiving." Faith with regard to Providence is not an intellectual exercise. It is not simply convincing yourself that it is true and accepting it as a fact: "I believe in Providence." That would almost be a useless exercise for the spiritual life. Rather, faith must be active and engaged. I have used Vladimir Lossky's description of faith before since it seems to capture well what I would describe as active faith.

Lossky describes faith as a "participatory adherence to the presence of Him Who reveals Himself." As phrases go, this one seems well-designed to make the eyes glaze over. But it is rich in its accuracy. First, it is not passive. A "participatory adherence" is a reaching out, a reaching into, and even a risk-taking loyalty towards the "presence of Him Who reveals Himself."

A "participatory adherence" towards what God is unfolding in your life and in the world around you is very much a first step in the life of transformation. Moment by moment, it is expressed in the giving of thanks for His goodwill that is at work in all things. We seem to want to find God above or beyond everything happening around us. But, properly understood, everything happening around us is the unfolding of God's Providence, a manifestation of the work of the "Divine Energies." When the phrase "Divine Energies" is invoked, most Orthodox immediately leap to thoughts of the "Uncreated Light." We think of St. Seraphim's transfiguration or other such reported phenomena, and even sigh, thinking that such wonders belong to great saints and not to us. It should be of note that Providence itself is a primary (maybe even *the* primary) work and manifestation of the Divine Energies.

Pseudo-Dionysius (5th-6th-century a.d.) has much to say on the relationship between Divine Providence and the Divine Energies. Alexander Golitzin, Oxford-trained patristics scholar and Archbishop of Dallas and the South, writes:

Providence, God in extension, is God as revealed, and God as revealed is revealed as "the reality of goodness, the cause of everything which is;" therefore, "one must celebrate the Providence of God as source of good in all its effects." Cause and ground of all, Providence embraces everything, and everything may therefore be seen as in some sense expressive of it. God may thus be called by any of the names of his creation. His name is every name and no name. ...As the super-essence, God is beyond any attribute we may conceive while as Providence, in his energies, he leaves no creature without its proper manifestation of the universal ground of being. (*Mystagogy*, Kindle Location, 3116).

There are, no doubt, events, and elements in our lives and in the world around us that feel like complete contradictions to God's good will unfolding. St. John of Damascus makes a distinction between God's Providence and the actions of our free-will. Nevertheless, even our evil actions do not set God's Providence aside. The contradictions that we encounter present opportunities to go beyond the merely reasonable or plausible. The acceptance of contradictions, or their contemplation, calls us to an adherence that extends the soul in a manner that transcends the surface of events. Again, this is primarily expressed through giving thanks, always and for all things.

There would be very little life in a soul that merely endured its lot with passive resignation. Christ does not go to the Cross in such a manner. Hebrews says that He went to the Cross for the "joy that was set before Him" (Heb. 12:2). The Cross is deeply embedded in the contradictions of Divine Providence. I often think of the joyful bearing of these contradictions being likened to the nails that fixed Christ to the wood. Our participatory adherence to such things is not a form of masochism – for if we enjoyed the suffering there would be no contradiction!

This is at the very heart of the Orthodox Christian faith. The secularized stories of our modern age are a renunciation of the God made known to us in Jesus Christ. Our own anxieties, born of this secular mythology, are themselves enthralled to the delusion of our own control of history. To confess that Christ is "King and God," is to acknowledge His Lordship in all things. He is Goodness, Truth, Beauty, Kindness, Mercy – all the names that He makes known to us in creation. In the face of every contradiction, we confess, "Nevertheless, I see His hand."

UPCOMING EVENTS AND SERVICES

~~~ Church School Today— Holy Water container craft continues  
Family Bowling Outing Feb. 11th following Pancake Breakfast in Cambridge Springs. 1-4pm

### THIS MONTH—

- Orthodox Bible Study – Feb. 8<sup>th</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup>– 6pm @ The Tarot Bean Café- Meadville, PA
- Altar Servers - see schedule
- 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 of the missions team. Also, OCMC sponsors various trips around the world. See the poster in the Hall. \*Please support our Kenyan Orthodox children. Please contact Marilyn Filipos. Thank you for your donations to the Kenyan children.

**Team Party/Meeting – Fri. Feb. 2<sup>nd</sup> 5pm-8pm @ the Parish House**

### House Blessings

Fr. Daniel will continue House blessings until Feb. 18<sup>th</sup>  
please contact him to schedule a time.

"Rejoice" scripture verse for the week:

### 1 Peter 4:13

**but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy.**

# Saints Peter and Paul Orthodox Church

25636 N. Mosiertown Rd Crossingville, PA 1641 Rev. Fr. Daniel Mathewson – *Rector* **Lord's Day – Jan 28<sup>th</sup>, 2018** Parish phone: 814-734-3801 Find us on the Web at: [www.orthodoxcrossingville.org](http://www.orthodoxcrossingville.org) or on Face book: Saints Peter and Paul Orthodox Church

## GLORY TO JESUS CHRIST !

**SUNDAY OF THE PUBLICAN AND THE PHARISEE —**

**Tone 1. Beginning of the Lenten Triodion. New Martyrs and Confessors of Russia. Ven. Ephraim the Syrian (373-379). Ven. Theodosius, Abbot, of Tot'ma (Vologdá—1568). Ven. Efrem (Ephraim), Abbot and Wonderworker of Novotórzshk (1053). St. Efrem, Bishop of Pereyaslavl' (Kiev Caves—ca. 1098). Ven. Palladius the Hermit, of Antioch (4th c.). St. Isaac the Syrian, Bishop of Nineveh (7th 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 Homebound... Vincent, Tanya, Richard, Helen, John, Irene, Ruth, Josephine, William, Claudia... Travelers..Dankos ...Catechumens –Rick and Christian Our Missionaries Abroad...Fr. David and Mt. Rozanne, 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 ....

**Today's Hymns** **Tone 1** **Troparion** **(Resurrection)**

**When the stone had been sealed by the Jews, while the soldiers were guarding Thy most pure body, Thou didst rise on the third day, O Savior, granting life to the world.**

**The powers of heaven therefore cried to Thee, O Giver of Life: "Glory to Thy Resurrection, O Christ!**

**Glory to Thy ^Kingdom!//**

**Glory to Thy dispensation, O Thou who lovest of mankind!"**

**Tone 4 Troparion** (New Martyrs of Russia)

**Today the Church of Russia forms a chorus in joy, praising her new martyrs and confessors; hierarchs and priests, royal passion-bearers, right-believing princes and princesses, venerable men and women, and all Orthodox Christians. Having laid down their life for faith in Christ during the days of godless persecution, they preserved the truth by the shedding of blood.// By their protection, O long-suffering Lord, preserve our land in Orthodoxy till the end of the age.**

**Tone 4 Kontakion** (from the Lenten Triodion)

**Let us flee from the pride of the Pharisee!  
Let us learn humility from the Publican's tears!  
Let us cry to our Savior:  
“Have mercy on us, //  
O only merciful One!”**

**Tone 1 Prokeimenon**

**Let Thy mercy, O Lord, be upon us as we have set our hope on Thee! (Ps 32/33:22)  
v: Rejoice in the Lord, O ye righteous! Praise befits the just! (Ps 32/33:1)**

**Tone 7 Prokeimenon** (New Martyrs of Russia)

**God is our refuge and strength, a help in afflictions that severely befall us. (Ps 45/46:1)**

**Tone 1  
Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia.  
v: God gives vengeance unto me, and subdues people under me.. (Ps 17/18:47)**

**v: :He magnifies the salvation of the King and deals mercifully with David, His anointed, and his seed forever. (Ps 17/18:50)**

**Tone 4  
v: The righteous cried, and the Lord heard them and delivered them out of all their troubles. (Ps 33/34:17)**

**Today's Scripture Readings:**

**2 Timothy 3:10-15 (Epistle)**

But you have carefully followed my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, love, perseverance, persecutions, afflictions, which happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra – what persecutions I endured. And out of them all the Lord delivered me. Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution. But evil men and impostors will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived. But you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned them, and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.

**Romans 8:28-39**

And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose. For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.

What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things? Who shall bring a charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written:

“For Your sake we are killed all day long; We are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.” Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

**Luke 18:10-14 (Gospel)**

“Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, ‘God, I thank You that I am not like other men – extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I possess.’ And the tax collector, standing afar off, would not so much as raise his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, ‘God, be merciful to me a sinner!’ I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather

than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.”

**Luke 21:8-19 (Gospel New Martyrs)**

<sup>8</sup>And He said: “Take heed that you not be deceived. For many will come in My name, saying, ‘I am He,’ and, ‘The time has drawn near.’ Therefore do not go after them. <sup>9</sup>But when you hear of wars and commotions, do not be terrified; for these things must come to pass first, but the end will not come immediately.” <sup>10</sup>Then He said to them, “Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. <sup>11</sup>And there will be great earthquakes in various places, and famines and pestilences; and there will be fearful sights and great signs from heaven. <sup>12</sup>But before all these things, they will lay their hands on you and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues and prisons. You will be brought before kings and rulers for My name's sake. <sup>13</sup>But it will turn out for you as an occasion for testimony. <sup>14</sup>Therefore settle it in your hearts not to meditate beforehand on what you will answer; <sup>15</sup>for I will give you a mouth and wisdom which all your adversaries will not be able to contradict or resist. <sup>16</sup>You will be betrayed even by parents and brothers, relatives and friends; and they will put some of you to death. <sup>17</sup>And you will be hated by all for My name's sake. <sup>18</sup>But not a hair of your head shall be lost. <sup>19</sup>By your patience possess your souls.

## Where Is God in All of This? God in Providence

Fr. Stephen Freeman

**Somewhere along the years, I gained a useful insight about “doing nothing.” On the whole, it's the lousiest strategy for living that can be found. We were not created to be passive creatures. Our life is a gift of a good God, but we are not called to be passive recipients.**

**Anyone who has struggled with a “besetting sin” will understand what I'm saying. Trying to “not” do something is the equivalent of doing nothing. It doesn't work. There is no “energy” in not doing something. If you want to *not* do something, then you need to *do* something else, instead. Nature abhors a vacuum; sin loves inactivity.**

**And this brings me to thoughts of Providence. Turning your life over to the will of God and understanding that all things are truly in His hands – that the outcome of all things belongs to God – can never be a matter of “passive resignation.” Our anxieties will return in short order and even give birth to resentment.**