



Saints Peter and Paul

Orthodox Church

Lord's Day – 11-17-2019

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Find us on the Web at www.orthodoxcrossingville.org

GLORY TO JESUS CHRIST

22nd SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST — **Tone 5.** St. Gregory, Wonderworker of Neo-Cæsarea (ca. 266-270). Ven. Nikon, Abbot of Rádonezh, disciple of Ven. Sergius (1426). Ven. Lazarus the Iconographer, of Constantinople (ca. 857). Martyr Gobron (Michael) and 133 soldiers, of Georgia (914). Ven. Genadius of Vatopedi (Mt. Athos).

PLEASE INCLUDE THESE OUR BROTHERS AND SISTERS IN

YOUR DAILY PRAYERS: Those in need – Fr. David, Fr., Fr. Andrew, Fr. Anthony, Mat. Gail, Mat. Donna, Mat. Pirsilla, Ambrose, Jarod, Magan, Anna, Mateo Kyra, Zosimas, Jesse, Grace, Nathan, Autumn, (Sergius), Eliza, Paul, Pearl, William, Joseph, Rich, Karen, John, Stavros, Nickolas, Timothy, Judy (child), James, Amanda, Damian, Delani, Jeremiah, Mary, Christine, Rick, Samuel, Timothy, Andrew, Kati, Simeon, Debbie, Christopher, Megan, Andrew, Margaret, Lorelly The Homebound... Ann, Tanya, Richard, Ruth, William, Claudia **Catechumen-** Christian ... **Travelers** ... **Military servers**... Greg ... **Newly Departed** –Theona Sekel, Helen Miller, Anna Anderson, Rodney Senyo, Josephine Olnvik, Marilyn Filipos, Irene Hoovler... **Departed Orthodox** Jeff, Catherine, John B., John S., Nickoli, Ann, Katherine, Vernon, Paul, James, Andrew, Peter, Paul, Margaret, Michael Mary Ann, Timothy... **Special requests**... Gilbert, Joanne, Phyllis, Jeniene, Anthony, Ian, Paul, Daleen, James, Sean, Liam, Bill, Wesley, Zera, Kim, Jim, Margaret, Loren, Nick, Russell, Julia, Shelby, Janet, Mareen, Lynn, Jarrod, Zach, Rod, Maragret. Helen, Dan, Jonathan, Donna.

Holy Hymns

Tone 5 Troparion (Resurrection)

Let us, the faithful, praise and worship the Word, co-eternal with the Father and the Spirit, born for our salvation from the Virgin; for He willed to be lifted up on the Cross in the flesh, to endure death, and to raise the dead// by His glorious Resurrection.

Tone 8 Troparion (Hierarch Gregory the Wonderworker)

You became worthy of your name* through your way of life; through your vigilance in prayer and your constant works of mercy. Therefore, O Father Gregory, beseech Christ God to enlighten our minds, that we may not sleep in sin, which leads to death!

Tone 5 Kontakion (Resurrection)

You descended into hell, O my Savior, shattering its gates as Almighty, resurrecting the dead as Creator, and destroying the sting of death. You have delivered Adam from the curse, O Lover of Man, // and we cry to You: “O Lord, save us!”

Tone 2 Kontakion (Hierarch Gregory the Wonderworker)

You received the power to perform miracles, frightening the devils and healing the sick through your wonderworking. All-wise Father Gregory, your deeds truly entitle you to be called “Wonderworker.”

Tone 5 Prokeimenon

You, O Lord, shall protect us and preserve us from this generation forever. (Ps 11/12:7)

v: Save me, O Lord, for there is no longer any that is godly. (Ps 11/12:1)

Tone 5 Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia!

v: I will sing of Your mercies, O Lord, forever; with my mouth I will proclaim Your truth from generation to generation. (Ps 88/89:1)

v: For You have said: “Mercy will be established forever; My truth will be prepared in the heavens.” (Ps 88/89:2)

Holy Scripture

John 21:15-25 (11th Matins Gospel)

So when they had eaten breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, “Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me more than these?” He said to Him, “Yes, Lord; You know that I love You.” He said to him, “Feed My lambs.” He said to him again a second time, “Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me?” He said to Him, “Yes, Lord; You know that I love You.” He said to him, “Tend My sheep.” He said to him the third time, “Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me?” Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time, “Do you love Me?” And he said to Him, “Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You.” Jesus said to him, “Feed My sheep. Most assuredly, I say to you, when you were younger, you girded yourself and walked where you wished; but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will gird you and carry you where you do not wish.” This He spoke, signifying by what death he would glorify God. And when He had spoken this, He said to him, “Follow Me.” Then Peter, turning around, saw the disciple whom Jesus loved following, who also had leaned on His breast at the supper, and said, “Lord, who is the one who betrays You?” Peter, seeing him, said to Jesus, “But Lord, what about this man?” Jesus said to him, “If I will that he remain till I come, what is that to you? You follow Me.” Then this saying went out among the brethren that this disciple would not die. Yet Jesus did not say to him that he would not die, but, “If I will that he remain till I come, what is that to you?” This is the disciple who testifies of these things, and wrote these things; and we know that his testimony is true. And there are also many other things that Jesus did, which if they were written one by one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that would be written. Amen.

Galatians 6:11-18 (Epistle)

See with what large letters I have written to you with my own hand! As many as desire to make a good showing in the flesh, these would compel you to be circumcised, only that they may not suffer persecution for the cross of Christ. For not even those who are circumcised keep the law, but they desire to have you circumcised that they may boast in your flesh. But God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but a new creation. And as many as walk according to this rule, peace and mercy be upon them, and upon the Israel of God. From now on let no one trouble me, for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus. Brethren, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen.

Luke 12:16-21 (Gospel)

Then He spoke a parable to them, saying: “The ground of a certain rich man yielded plentifully. And he thought within himself, saying, ‘What shall I do, since I have no room to store my crops?’ So he said, ‘I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build greater, and there I will store all my crops and my goods. ‘And I will say to my soul, “Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease; eat, drink, and be merry.”’ But God said to him, ‘Fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you

have provided?’ So is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.’”

HOLY ACTIONS:

Today: Parish Council – following Coffee Hour

Sun. Nov. 17th –CGS, Discovering Prayer, Matins – 9:00am

Wed. Nov. 20th Great Vespers for the Entrance of the Birth-giver of God – 4pm

Thurs. Nov. 21st – Divine Liturgy 9:30am

Sun. Nov. 24th -- CGS, Discovering Prayer, Matins –9:00am

- Family outing to Vertical Jump in Erie 2-4pm See Megan

Wed. Nov. 27th – Akathist Glory to God for all things- 6pm

Thurs. Nov. 28th – Thanksgiving Day

Thurs. Dec. 5th – Great Vespers – St. Nicholas Day- 4pm

Fri. Dec. 6th - Divine Liturgy – St Nicholas Day- 9:30am

Sat. Dec. 7th BAKE SALE 12-2pm

Sun. Dec. 8th – St. Nicholas Party during Coffee Hour

The Morality of Christmas

You might be thinking that it's too early to hear about Christmas – Thanksgiving is yet a couple of weeks away. However, for the Orthodox, the Nativity Fast began on November 15. It is already time to give our thoughts to Christmas – our Winter Pascha.

This article (a reprint) reflects on a theme that has been present in my thoughts for several years. I pray it will be of use as you re-order your earthly cares.

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Morality is tricky business in what is an extremely moral society. I pray my readers to be patient with me as I explain what I think is the problem. First, I will note that *morality* is all that is left when the most fundamental grounds of a culture have been destroyed. We indeed live in just such a time, hence the rise of a vehemence in the moral life. Second, I will suggest that what we as Christians must strive for within ourselves is less and less of a moral grounding in our lives and a greater grounding in *that which is* – all of which requires some explaining.

Two men building a fence along the edge of a cliff will not have an argument about which side to stand on as they do their work.

Gravity presents its own argument and its word is final. Indeed, it is not an argument – it is *real*. This is the nature of Christian moral claims. But our modern world has altered this understanding.

Today, we use the term “moral” to describe behaviors that adhere to some particular standard or guide. As such, everybody is “moral” and lives according to some form of morality: people do not behave in a random manner. Everyone has thoughts and opinions about their own behavior and the behavior of others (no matter how much they may say otherwise). Those thoughts and opinions need not be based in anything other than opinions and feelings – indeed, most morality in our modern world has no other basis. And this is the point.

The Christian understanding of morality is not arbitrary in the least. There is nothing in the whole of the faith’s teaching whose ground is simply “God said so.” Nothing within the Christian moral life is arbitrary. What God commands is our *good* and He directs us according to the goodness of our existence and the creation in which we live.

If anyone asks the reason for any action within the Christian life, a good answer, rooted in our own well-being and the well-being of others should be forthcoming. The commandments of Christ do not simply tell us what we *should* do, but in their telling, reveal the very nature of reality to us.

The so-called breakdown of morality in the modern world is not a *moral* problem. What has broken down is not morality, but any agreed notion about the nature of the world. Our perceptions of reality itself have shattered into disparate fragments. There is a strange aching for morality, a tormented desire for goodness in some form or guise. But as the ground of reality has shattered, so

has the possibility of moral conversation. We shout in hopes of being heard.

When we lose a common understanding of reality itself, all that is left is bald assertion. The morality of the modern world is simply *power*. It is, in one form or another, the use of violence (or its threat) that argues. Certain positions and behaviors are extolled while others are not only condemned but increasingly demonized. In the baseless morality of modernity, those with whom we disagree are not simply wrong: they are thought to be *evil*. This is the only conclusion that can be reached when what is right is established solely through *choice*. If what is good is only good because I choose it, then choosing otherwise must be seen as evil and named as such. Classical Christianity, on the other hand, need demonize no one. No human being can ever be the “enemy” (Eph. 6:12). What is right and what is true is not a matter of *choice* – it is established by reality itself. In our modern setting, many (even most) will argue with the nature and character of reality. Some will even assert that reality is nothing more than a social construct. However, if something is true because it is *real*, then it ultimately makes its own argument. You don’t have to defend gravity.

In the confusion of our present times, however, it is easy to overlook the true morality that God and creation uphold. An absolutely essential element of that reality is expressed in the mystery of Christmas. God becomes a man and is birthed into our world. This reveals human beings as bearers of the image of God and dictates the very reason for the manner we are commanded to treat others. More than this, the Incarnation of Christ reveals the reality of life-as-communion (indeed, the whole work of Christ makes this known). It tells us that when we harm another, we not only harm the image of God, but we, in fact, do harm to our own selves.

St. Paul appeals to this understanding when he speaks about marriage:

So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord does the church. For we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones. (Eph 5:28-30)

This same reality is revealed in Christ’s statement: “Inasmuch as you have done it unto the least of these my brethren, you did it unto me” (Matt. 25:40). It is very much worth pondering that Christ does not say that what we do to others is “as if” we had done it to Him. No. He reveals the utter Divine solidarity of the Incarnation. He is the *other* – each of them, everywhere and always. This reality undergirds the whole of His “ethical” teaching. To love as Christ loves begins with recognizing Him in the fullness of the Incarnation. Tragically, modern versions of morality, rooted in the will (elevating free choice to the primary position within all things), are always moving towards violence. There is nothing to which one can point other than “my choice,” to justify anything. And my choice only has power when I am willing to exercise the violence required to give it power. The more our culture moves towards the morality of the will, the more violent and coercive it will become.

The Incarnation of Christ is without violence (on the part of God). There is no coercion. From the beginning, Mary is asked and yields herself to be the mother of the Savior with joy. All that is endured, up to and including the Cross are freely accepted and not coerced. But the coming of Christ is not strange for creation – it does not even offer the violence required of accommodation. St. John says of Christ, “He came to His own people.” The world was created through Christ, the Logos, and bears His image within all things. Far from doing violence, His coming reveals things to be what they truly are. All things find their true home in Him. This is the morality of Christmas – all things becoming what they truly are. This is peace on earth and good will towards all of mankind.

By Fr. Stephen Freeman