



Saints Peter and Paul Orthodox Church

Lord's Day - 12-12-2021

Glory to Jesus Christ!

25th Sunday after Pentecost

The Holy Forefathers

St. Spirodon the wonderworker

St. Mardarius of Libertyville

Joy to All!

Holy Hymns

Tone 8 Troparion (Resurrection)

Thou didst descend from on high, O Merciful One!
Thou didst accept the three day burial to free us from our sufferings!//
O Lord, our Life and Resurrection, glory to Thee!

Tone 2 Troparion (Forefathers)

Through faith Thou didst justify the Forefathers,
betrothing through them the Church of the gentiles.
These saints exult in glory, for from their seed came forth a glorious fruit: she who bore Thee without seed.// So by their prayers, O Christ God, have mercy on us!

Tone 1 Troparion - (St. Spirodon)

At the First Council you appeared as a champion of Truth and a Wonderworker, O our God-bearing Father Spyridon. / For you spoke to one dead in her grave, and transformed a serpent into gold; / while chanting your holy prayers / you had Angels serving with you, most holy one. / Glory to Him Who glorified you. / Glory to Him Who crowned you. / Glory to Him Who, through you, grants healing to all.

Tone 2 Kontakion - (St. Spirodon)

Wounded by the love of Christ, most holy one, your mind was given wings by the radiance of the Spirit, O God-inspired one, / you found your work in active contemplation, O God-pleasing Spyridon, / becoming a godly sacrifice, and entreating divine illumination for all.

Tone 6 Kontakion (Forefathers)

You did not worship the graven image,
O thrice-blessed ones, but armed with the immaterial Essence of God, you were glorified in a trial by fire. From the midst of unbearable flames you called on God, crying: "Hasten, O compassionate One!
Speedily come to our aid, // for Thou art merciful and able to do as Thou dost will!"

Tone 4 Prokeimenon (Forefathers)

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 4

Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia!
V. Moses and Aaron were among His priests; Samuel also was among those who called on His Name. (*Ps. 98:6*)
V. They called to the Lord and He answered them. (*Ps. 98:6*)

Holy Scripture:

Colossians 3:4-11 (Epistle)

When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory. Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. Because of these things the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience, in which you yourselves once walked when you lived in them. But now you yourselves are to put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth. Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds, and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him, where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised nor uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave nor free, but Christ is all and in all.

Luke 14:16-24 (Gospel)

Then He said to him, "A certain man gave a great supper and invited many, and sent his servant at supper time to say to those who were invited, 'Come, for all things are now ready.' But they all with one accord began to make excuses. The first said to him, 'I have bought a piece of ground, and I must go and see it. I ask you to have me excused.' And another said, 'I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I am going to test them. I ask you to have me excused.' Still another said, 'I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.' So that servant came and reported these things to his master. Then the master of the house, being angry, said to his servant, 'Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in here the poor and the maimed and the lame and the blind.' And the servant said, 'Master, it is done as you commanded, and still there is room.' Then the master said to the servant, 'Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled.' For I say to you that none of those men who were invited shall taste my supper."

Pray with out ceasing...

PLEASE INCLUDE

THESE OUR BROTHERS AND SISTERS IN YOUR DAILY

PRAYERS: Those in need - Fr. Andrew, Fr. Isaac, Fr. David, Fr. Anthony, Fr. Joseph, Fr. Zachariah, Iguman Patrick, Hieromonk Herman, Fr. Dusan, Fr. Christopher, Prez. Alexandria, Mat. Gail, Mat. Donna, Mat. Pirsilla, Mat. Trudi, Judy and child, Tamara, Olga, Susan, Ron, Karen, Mary B. Margret, Bill S., Lexi, John, Nickolas, Timothy, Preston, Olivia, Jesse, Grace Delani, Jeremiah, Valentina, Sandy, William, Steve A., Anna, Sally, Noah...

The Homebound Mary G

Catechumen- Christian... Military servers...Greg

Special requests... Paul, Gilbert, Joanne, Phyllis, Anthony, Ian, Paul, James, Sean, Liam, Bill, Wesley, Kim, Margaret, Loren, Julia, Shelby, Janet, Lynn, Margret. Helen, Dan, Jonathan, Donna, Nicholas, Maya, Mia, Charles, Gregory, Donna, Don. Laura, Brenda Laken, Bob, My, Mojave, Maxwell, Gary...

Departed: Priest Anastacy, Marie Guidus, Vincent, Richard, George, Ruth, Pearl, Jim(Grace's Dad), Ann, Lillian, Alice, William, Claudia, Theona, Helen, Ann, Katherine, Vernon, Paul, James, Nikolai, Andrew, Peter, Paul, Margaret, Michael Mary Ann, Timothy...

Services and Activities (Calendar changes see website) www.orthodoxcrossingville.org

Today Divine Liturgy - Coffee Hour

Wed. Dec. 15th - Vespertal Liturgy - 6pm

Sat. Dec. 18th - Great Vespers - 4pm

Sun. Dec. 19th - Divine Liturgy - 9:30am

NATIVITY SERVICES

Wed. Dec. 22nd - Akathist to The Theotokos - 10am

Thurs. Dec. 23rd - Royal Hours - 6pm

Fri. Dec. 24th - Vespertal Liturgy of St. Basil - 10am

-Holy Supper- 5:00pm

-Compline/ Vigil - 6:30pm

Sat. Dec. 25th - Nativity of Jesus Christ - Divine Liturgy- 10am

Great Vespers - 4pm

Sun. Dec. 26th -Synaxis of the Theotokos -Divine Liturgy 9:30am

MOTHER BLESSING

All ladies of our parish are invited to a Mother Blessing for expectant mother Judy Lynch on Saturday, January 15, 2022 starting with Vespers at 4pm and potluck dinner at 5pm. Please RSVP to Anna Rachocki.

HOLY WORDS

Cultivating Inexpressible Joy

Godly life is joyful. Secular life is sorrowful. For forty years, as though the presence of God were a toxin in our culture, schools and public square, many of America's leaders have been zealously working to detoxify our land. Not surprisingly, the more secularized we have become, the more sorrowful we have become. Now here is an amazing disconnect. Why is it that America has never been so Christian and yet so joyless? A greater percentage of our population self-identifies as Christian than at any time in our nation's history, yet we are by all observable phenomena radically depressed. How are we to explain such an anomaly? The normal state of internal affairs for Christians is expressed by St. Peter: "...Jesus Christ, whom having not seen you love. Though now you do not see Him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory" (1 Peter 1:8). Prozac is no substitute for joy inexpressible. While there are many contributing factors to this epidemic of joylessness, I would like to suggest the primary cause: isolation.

Joy and the Presence of God

Joy is an attribute of Almighty God. He is joy, and the joy of His people. "Oh, send out Thy light and Thy truth! Let them lead me; Let them bring me to Thy holy hill and to Thy tabernacle. Then I will go to the altar of God, to God my exceeding joy" (Psalm 43:4). God is joy, and to draw near to God is to draw near to joy. "Thou shalt show me the path of life; In Thy presence is the fullness of joy; At Thy right hand are pleasures forevermore" (Psalm 16:11). It may be obvious to many, but in my pastoral experience it needs to be repeated that the primary cause of depression is being far from God. It is the absence of God that elicits within us the greatest grief. Joy is not the absence of sorrows; joy is the presence of God in all these things. It is our impression that we are alone in the midst of our pains that is the source of our greatest sorrow. When God is there, all of our difficulties are infused with a mysterious joy. When He is not, even our greatest earthly happiness is unsatisfying.

When we endure the crosses of this poor life without the knowledge that God is in them all, and has sent them to us in His providence from the abundance of His love designed for our salvation, then these very crosses kill us. They provoke within us a great despair, and this despair, according to St. John Chrysostom, is the greatest of the tools of the evil one. These things need not be. An icon of inexpressible joy offered by God to the world in recent centuries is the life of St. Seraphim of Sarov (1759-1813).² All the saints of God, by being God-bearers, carried in their bosoms unbounded joy and passed it to all who gathered around them. St. Seraphim, however, was exceptional. Though he was a monk he chose not to don the traditional black cassock, but wore throughout the year a white one. Rather than saying, "Christ is risen," only for the forty days of Pascha, as is customary, he employed this greeting every day of the year. He greeted his visitors, who included the likes of the Tsar and Tsaritsa of Russia, universally as "My joy."

His entire life was spent in the quest to acquire the Holy Spirit. "Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to youIf you know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him" (St. Luke 11:9,13). St. Seraphim knocked. For a thousand days and nights he remained upon a rock in prayer. St. Seraphim asked and St. Seraphim received. The Holy Spirit came upon him in great measure, and the fruit of the Spirit's presence was inexpressible joy. "For the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace..." (Galatians 5:22).

In the famous *Conversation*, St. Seraphim explains to his spiritual son Motovilov:

When the Spirit of God descends on a man, and envelops him in the fullness of his presence, the soul overflows with unspeakable joy, for the Holy Spirit fills everything he touches with joy.... This is that joy of which the Lord speaks in His Gospel: 'A woman when she is in travail has sorrow, because her hour has come; but when she is delivered of the child, she remembers no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world. In the world you will be sorrowful; but when I see you again, your heart will rejoice, and your joy no one will take from you' (Jn. 16:21-22). If the first-fruits of future joy have already filled your soul with such sweetness, with such happiness, what shall we say of the joy in the Kingdom of Heaven, which awaits all those who weep here on earth?... Then this transitory and partial joy which we now feel will be revealed in all its fullness, overwhelming our being with ineffable delights which no one will be able to take from us.³

Overcoming Isolation from God

The path to overcoming isolation from God begins, continues, and ends with repentance. The first word spoken by our Savior in His public preaching was: "Repent!" (St. Matthew 4:17). Likewise, His last words to His Apostles prior to His Ascension were that "repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations" (St. Luke 24:47).

Now some readers may be thinking to themselves that this article was supposed to be about joy, not the tears of repentance. Any dichotomy between the two, however, is false. There is no joy without repentance, and there is no true repentance that is not followed by, and indeed infused with, great joy. This divine union of repentance and joy is no more clearly set forth than in the Psalm of Repentance *par excellence*, Psalm 50 (LXX). This prayer of heartfelt repentance was authored by King David as an offering to God following his tragic fall into adultery and murder. The repentance modeled in Psalm 50 is the balm of healing and restoration of joy for ruined consciences and broken hearts to this very day. *Repentance is the divine Prozac*. "Have mercy on me O God! Blot out my transgressions! I have done evil in Thy sight! Create in me a clean heart, O God!" And then comes the joy. "Make me to hear joy and gladness, that the bones which Thou hast broken may rejoice.... Restore to me the joy of Thy salvation."

Repentance Is the Restoration of Inexpressible Joy

There is no more expedient path to joy than sustained repentance. Christians know by experience that joy is not the polar opposite of sorrow, but its transformation. *Charmolypi* is the character of the Christian. This word is found in the work of St. John of Sinai,⁴ the author of the Ladder of Divine Ascent, and was probably coined by him. It means "joyful sorrow" or "bitter joy," and it is the normative spirit of the Christian. Young children model this *charmolypi* when, in the midst of a crying spasm, with tears running down their faces, they catch a glimpse of their mother staring lovingly at them, and then they break into laughter. Tears, laughter, tears, and laughter are meshed together, and soon all comes to calm. So it is with the repenting Christian, who perceives the gaze of His loving heavenly Father. Our tears become infused with joy.

The Modern Abandonment of Repentance

Now if repentance is the path to joy, a culture that does not repent is going to be joyless. The priest's confessional has been abandoned as the psychologist's couch has been embraced. Today Roman Catholic priests have a few hours a week slotted for confessions, when just fifty years ago whole days were taken up with the task. Most Catholics simply are not confessing. Most Protestants have not historically practiced private confession, but have in their tradition an emphasis on self-examination and repentance, but today 'repentance' is not viewed as "seeker-friendly" in Protestant churches.⁵ Are we Orthodox Christians faithfully confessing? The joy of the Resurrection follows the agony of the Crucifixion. The joy of the Christian life is the fruit of repentance. Repentance removes our isolation. *Practice regular confession and your life will change for the better*. For the next year read a prayer of repentance for your sins every evening before retiring. Then do a thorough examination of your conscience once a month and make confession. In so doing you can expect to be divinely stabbed with the joy inexpressible.

By: V. Rev. Josiah Trenham, Ph.D. (Dunelm), Pastor