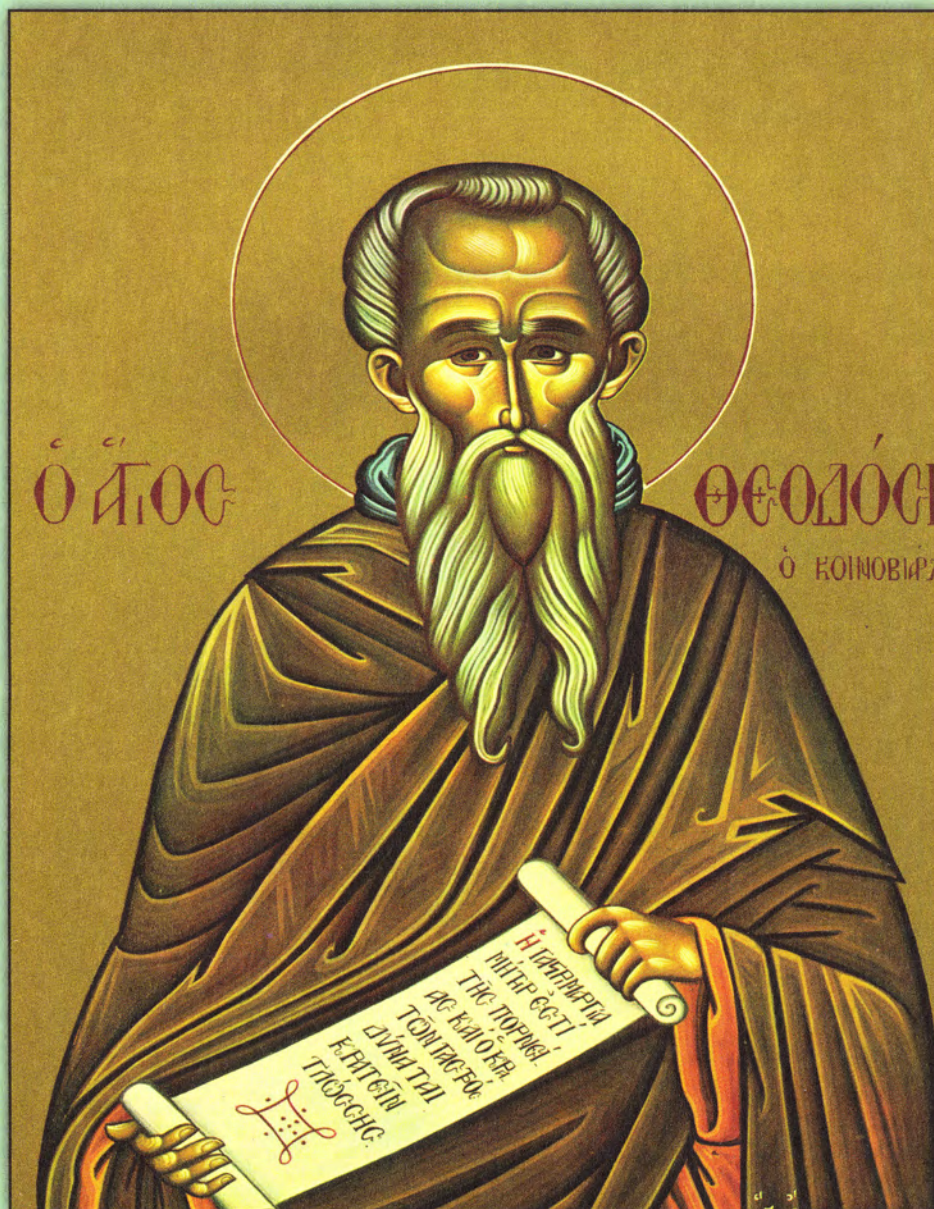


SUNDAY AFTER THEOPHANY



Icon of Saint Theodosius -- January 11th



*January 11, 2015*

*TONE 6*

*SUNDAY AFTER THEOPHANY*

*OUR VENERABLE FATHER THEODOSIUS THE COENOBIARCH*

*SCHEDULE OF SERVICES FOR THE WEEK OF JANUARY 12 – JANUARY 18*

SATURDAY, JANUARY 17

NOTE: GREAT VESPERS WILL NOT TAKE PLACE TODAY.

SUNDAY, JANUARY 18 – *SUNDAY OF ZACCHAEUS; OUR HOLY FATHERS ATHANASIUS AND CYRIL, ARCHBISHOPS OF ALEXANDRIA*

9:30 AM – Divine Liturgy

For All Parishioners

*If you are reading the bulletin during the Liturgy (including the homily), please **stop** and be attentive – будьмо уважні!*

**May his memory be eternal!**

**Вічная Память!**

*Yaroslav Perun, faithful parishioner and father of Olga May, fell asleep in the Lord this past Tuesday, the Feast of Theophany. Internment will take place in Tucson, AZ. Please remember Yaroslav in your prayers as well as Olga and her entire family.*

“We fit a creed to the way we live, rather than the way we live to a creed; we suit religion to our actions, rather than actions to religion. We try to keep religion on a speculative basis in order to avoid moral reproaches on our conduct. We sit at the piano of life and insist that every note we strike is right – because we struck it. We justify want of faith by saying ‘I don’t go to Church, but I am better than those who do.’”

*Archbishop Fulton Sheen (Peace of Soul)*

**Warm Welcome!**

We warmly welcome all of our visitors!  
It’s good to have you with us!

*Liturgical Calendars for 2015 are available in the church hall. Special thanks to Goodbody Mortuary for once again sponsoring our calendars.*

**Haven’t seen someone in a while?**

Give them a call. See how they are doing. Let them know that you not only miss them but also care enough to see if everything is okay. A kind word can go a long way.

**God’s Extended Hand**

FOCUS (Fellowship of Orthodox Christians United to Serve) has provided us with a special bin for collecting donations of clothing, toiletries, etc. to be distributed at GEH. It is located near the door of the church hall.

**Did You Know We’re on Facebook?**

“Like” us to receive our posts, and so that your friends can get to know your church a little. Who knows who else may “Like” us too? <https://www.facebook.com/pages/St-John-the-Baptizer-Ukrainian-Catholic-Church/137098752989860>

## Of Course We Are Called to be Moral – A Response to My Critics Fr. Stephen Freeman

Well, the firestorm has moved even to my host, Ancient Faith Blogs. There, you can find a response and a critique of my last article, *The Unmoral Christian*. I find nothing in the response with which I disagree. The author argues that externals are often important, certainly for beginners, and suggests that I have overplayed my hand in overemphasized the inner nature of our lives. That is perhaps true.

Every child certainly begins life being taught clear, outward rules for their behavior. However, before they reach puberty, I would maintain, they have probably already received what moral formation is likely to take place in their life. The rest of their lives will be marked by weaknesses and struggles that were already set in place within childhood. At least that's my observation and pastoral experience.

As a young or beginning Christian, that moral struggle will need to be supported and encouraged. But as Christians grow, they need more meat and less milk. The experience of a serious adult can provoke deep dismay as they notice that over the years little or nothing has changed. One well-noted "de-convert" from the Orthodox faith observed several years ago that he saw no evidence of what he thought was a moral progress promised in Orthodoxy (this was his misinterpretation of the teaching on Theosis). The change from "glory to glory into the image of Christ" is not represented by an increasingly successful moral struggle.



It is, as I noted in my article, a transformation in the Divine Life. That transformation might very well be revealed in greater moral abilities, but not necessarily so. Some things remain quite hidden, even unto death. If you want to see

the Divine Transformation, you will have to gain a perception that goes much deeper than outer behavior.

The author cites several fathers who commend moral actions. We must, I well agree, begin with the commandments of Christ. It is of note, in his citing of St. Ambrose, that Ambrose trods a two-fold path. One for the beginner and learner, another for the monastic (the "perfect"). This distinction becomes, in the later West, a chasm between the laity and monastics – with only the monastics being expected to seriously pursue the harder points of the gospel. In modern Protestant theology (cf. Reihold Niebuhr) Christ's commandments become bifurcated – some being treated as unattainable and not really meant to be kept. That distinction never took root in the Tradition of the East. We clearly do not see monastics and laity as distinct classes – they only differ in the level of asceticism that they undertake. There are, for example, only one set of rules for fasting in the Orthodox Church. Monastics keep them more strictly. But there is not a "perfect" fast for some, and a "pretty good" fast for others.

I cited the importance of "failure" with regard to the commandments. This is a pastoral observation (not dogmatic). But I

maintain, along with many spiritual fathers, that we cannot know the fullness of Christ without also knowing the emptiness of ourselves. The morally “successful” are often full of themselves. Christ was killed by the morally successful. St. Paul called such successes “filthy rags.”

While I readily grant the need for the commandments and clear direction in our lives (where did I deny this?), we can no longer write as though we were living among children. Our culture has entered a wild, rebellious, adolescent phase in which everything is being questioned. Many times we can no longer answer the hunger of the world by saying, “This is the commandment – do it.” Hearts are desperately thirsty and have been drinking at wells of false and misleading teaching. Nothing is perhaps more perverted today than the public morality of our times.

My writing effort, which I characterize as evangelistic and apologetic, seeks to engage

the world and the culture at the level of its angst and to give answers (or even create questions) that can be chewed on. I think that there needs to be a heftier diet out there. I use my theological and pastoral background to do just that.

I suspect that what I do is only marginally successful. Some will understand what I have written and find it to be of help. However, I have heard in some places (though not in the cited article) that I’m somehow sounding an uncertain trumpet, creating anxiety and questions about morality during a time of moral questioning. I have perhaps underestimated the angst of the Orthodox about their own moral security.

During a time of moral questioning, there needs to be some serious answers. And those, it seems to me, must go beyond citing the rules and the law.

But if it troubles you, then please let it go. I would not trouble you further.

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### **Eschatological Eloquence – Fr. Aidan Kimel’s Response**

Fr. Stephen Freeman

My long-time friend, Fr. Aidan Kimel, has written a very helpful article on the topic of the “Unmoral Christian.” He enlists C.S. Lewis in the cause of a proper understanding. What could be better than that? I strongly encourage those readers who are still pondering all of this – to read his article which follows. He adds meat to my bare bones!

### **Grace, Moralism and Unmoral Christianity**

20 December 2014 by Fr Aidan Kimel

In his recent blog article “The Un-moral Christian,” Fr Stephen Freeman criticizes the tendency to reduce the Christian life to obedience to moral rules. “The nature of the Christian life,” he declares, “is not rightly described as the adherence to an external set of norms and standards, even if those norms and standards are described as being ‘from God.’ The ‘unmoral’ life of Christians is a different mode of existence. The Christian life is not described so much by what it does as by how it does.” I was reminded of a letter C. S. Lewis

wrote to Dom Bede Griffiths:

*The bad (material) tree cannot produce good fruit. But oddly, it can produce fruits that by all external tests are indistinguishable from the good ones: the act done from one’s own separate and unredeemed, tho’ “moral” will, looks exactly like the act done by Christ in us. And oddly enough it is the tree’s real duty to go on producing these imitation fruits till it recognizes this futility and despairs and is made a new (spiritual) tree. (Quoted in*

*Leanne Payne, Real Presence, p. 100.)*

Two trees that appear identical in every external respect, yet one is doomed to destruction and death. What is the difference between the redeemed and the unredeemed person? They exist differently. One is alive, the other is walking dead. One has surrendered his will to Christ and been regenerated in the Spirit; the other still lives in the world and abides in a self-chosen mode of damnation. No doubt the latter could, by an exertion of will, produce more good works and become an even better moral person; but unless he is born anew by the Spirit, he will remain incapable of producing the fruit of eternal life. And as our Lord warned us: "Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire" (Matt 7:19).

How then might we properly describe the unmoral life of the Christian? Fr Stephen provocatively answers, "It is about being a god":

*This, of course, is shocking language, but it is the Christian faith. The life of a fish is about being a fish. It is not about swimming or breathing water (though these certainly are part of a fish's life). But a man with a special device can breathe water and swim for days without ever becoming a fish. In the same way, the Christian life is not about improving our human behavior, it is about taking on a new kind of existence. And that existence is nothing less than divine life.*

The *life* of resurrection ... *life* in the Spirit ... *life* in the kingdom ... *life* within the Holy Trinity. Here is the heart of unmoral Christianity—not improved behavior but the freedom of the children of God. We have died with Christ and our life is now hidden with Christ in God. The world worries about morality and teaches the desirability of right behavior. But baptism brings a new mode of existence, a life beyond death in the risen Jesus: "We eat Christ. We drink Christ. We breathe Christ. We do all things in Him and through Him." As St Seraphim of Sarov memorably taught, prayer, fasting and works of mercy have their essential place in the Christian life; but they do not constitute its goal and end: "the true aim of our Christian life consists of the

acquisition of the Holy Spirit of God."

Fr Stephen's eschatological perspective leads him to an understanding of the Sacrament of Confession that moves beyond moralism. "Confession is the sacrament of repentance, our turning to God," he writes. "It is not the sacrament of the second chance and the harder try." I might put it in a somewhat different way: confession is returning to our death in Christ. We offer to the Lord the corpse that we are and submit to being slain anew by the Spirit. We would prefer to lead a moralistic existence. As the Israelites yearned to return to the flesh-pots of Egypt, so we, despite all we have received, yearn to return to the simple existence of prescription and laws. Yet God will not be satisfied with anything less than our death, for *it is in our death that he comes to reside*. As Fr Stephen expresses it in his earlier article "You're Not Doing Better":

*St. Gregory of Nyssa once stated, "Man is mud whom God has commanded to become a god." This is not the story of progress. We are not mud that is somehow improving itself towards divinity. There is nothing mud can do to become divine. And if we were honest with ourselves, we don't even become better mud. ... What is happening in our spiritual lives is not the perfecting of a better "me." It is like a comparison between mud and light. Really great, truly outstanding mud, can only ever be mud. It never becomes more "light-like." ...*

*"I do unite myself to Christ," is the statement candidates make at Holy Baptism. These are the words of mud speaking of the most wonderful possible gift. That we should become gods is Christ's gift to us, not our achievement. It is a reality birthed in our muddy souls at Baptism. And what is birthed in us is a new creation, not really the mud man at all. ... The life in Christ is not at all about improvement. It is rather more about failure. ... The spiritual life is not an improvement of the moral self, it is the finding and the living into the true self (the New Man), birthed in us through Christ. We lose the moral self in order to find the true self. We confess our moral weakness and there we find the*

*true strength of the New Man. We empty the moral self and understand that even its best effort and performance is but “hay, wood and straw” (1 Cor. 3:12).*

Yesterday Dylan Pahman published a respectful critique of Freeman over at Orthodoxy and Heterodoxy. He finds Fr Stephen’s approach a bit over the top. “To be more than moral, as Fr Stephen is using the term, nevertheless requires first being moral,” he writes. He agrees that the goal of Christian life is love and freedom, but we do not start there. As the Scriptures teach us: “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge” (Prov 1:7). Only as we mature and gain victory over passions may we one day say with St Antony: “Now I do not fear God, but I love him: for love casteth out fear.” Over against the evangelical gospel of the staretz of Oak Ridge, Pahman poses the everyday ascetical struggle of repentance, prayer and fasting.

Pahman invokes the wisdom of the spiritual Fathers, yet the eschatological dimension seems to be missing or at least pushed far into the background. Instead of proclaiming our death and resurrection in Christ, he invites us to do the best that we can, in the hope that eventually grace will be fully internalized:

*What the Fathers seem to be saying is the following: You would like to be deified but you do not know the way? You wish to love as a true child of God but you cannot? Learn from those who have walked this way before you. They began by fasting and praying and trying to fulfill the commandments, with much fear. Over time, these became a habit, internalized as a second, virtuous nature. Or rather, as the tarnish of passions is more and more cleared away from the image of God within you, your true nature as a child of God will shine through, restored in the likeness of Jesus Christ. This is firstly a matter of his grace, offered to you through the mysteries of the Church, but it is also a matter of synergy—you must cooperate with the work of this grace; you too must act. And in acting moral, you become more than merely moral, transfigured by the grace of God within you.*

In his response to Pahman’s article, Fr Stephen says that he finds nothing in the response with which he disagrees and acknowledges that perhaps he did overplay his hand. But I would personally like to encourage Fr Stephen to stand his eschatological ground. We do not just end with theosis, after a lifetime of repentance, hard work, and purification. We begin with theosis; we begin with our death in Christ and our baptismal resurrection; we begin with our re-creation by the Spirit. Life within the God who is Father, Son, and Spirit is not reserved for the spiritual mature who have perfectly purified the passions and achieved impassibility and holiness. It is given freely and unconditionally to all who have surrendered themselves to Christ Jesus in faith. The Apostle Paul speaks clearly of this gift in his letters:

*For in him the whole fulness of deity dwells bodily, and you have come to fulness of life in him, who is the head of all rule and authority. In him also you were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of flesh in the circumcision of Christ; and you were buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead. And you, who were dead in trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, having canceled the bond which stood against us with its legal demands; this he set aside, nailing it to the cross. (Col 2:9-14)*

We do not become unmoral by first becoming moral, as Pahman suggests. The dead tree can only produce dead fruit. We must first be slain by Christ. The baptismal impartation of the Spirit precedes the fruit of the Spirit. In the Church the kingdom is both here and not yet, yet already we have received, declares the Apostle, the “fulness of life.” Only within the eschatological mode of existence, bestowed in baptism, may we speak of the ascetical struggle in a way that avoids the moralism that flows from death and leads to death.

## Sunday offering for December 21

Amount	Number
\$10.00	4
\$15.00	1
\$20.00	2
\$30.00	1
\$35.00	2 (loose)
\$40.00	2
\$50.00	4
\$75.00	4
\$80.00	1
\$100.00	4
\$150.00	1
\$200.00	1
\$300.00	1
<hr/>	
\$1905.00	

Parishioner Total: \$1885.00  
 Guest: \$20.00

Average / parish household (42): \$45.98  
 Weekly Stewardship Goal: \$2125.00  
 Deficit: (\$240.00)

## Sunday offering for December 25

Amount	Number
\$5.00	1
\$10.00	1
\$20.00	4
\$25.00	2
\$40.00	1
\$50.00	4
\$100.00	6
\$135.00	1 (loose)
\$200.00	1
\$300.00	1
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\$1570.00	

Parishioner Total: \$1535.00  
 Guest: \$35.00

Average / parish household (42): \$37.44  
 Weekly Stewardship Goal: \$2125.00  
 Deficit: (\$590.00)

### ***Please Note:***

When you are away, please don't forget that the church still relies on your contributions. Our bills do not go on vacation. Your absence on any Sunday does not negate your obligation to support your home parish.

## Sunday offering for December 28

Amount	Number
\$5.00	1
\$10.00	1
\$15.00	1
\$20.00	2
\$25.00	1
\$30.00	1
\$40.00	1
\$50.00	4 (1 loose)
\$300.00	1
<hr/>	
\$665.00	

Parishioner Total: \$635.00  
 Guest: \$30.00

Average / parish household (42): \$15.49  
 Weekly Stewardship Goal: \$2125.00  
 Deficit: (\$1490.00)

## Sunday offering for January 4

Amount	Number
\$15.00	2
\$20.00	4 (1 loose)
\$30.00	1
\$35.00	1
\$40.00	2
\$50.00	2
\$100.00	1
\$150.00	1
\$200.00	1
\$300.00	1
\$400.00	1
<hr/>	
\$1465.00	

Parishioner Total: \$1465.00

Average / parish household (42): \$18.09  
 Weekly Stewardship Goal: \$2125.00  
 Deficit: (\$660.00)

### **Pastor:**

Fr. James Bankston: (619) 905-5278

### **Pastoral Council:**

Fr. Deacon Frank Avant: (760) 805-1667  
 Vladimir Bachynsky: (619) 865-1279  
 Mark Hartman: (619) 446-6357  
 Luke Miller: (858) 354-2008  
 Jeanine Soucie: (718) 674-4529

### **Social Committee Chairperson:**

Megan Hartman (619) 540-4291

### **Finance Committee:**

Bohdan Knianicky: (619) 303-9698  
 Fr. Deacon Frank Avant: (760) 805-1667



**Українська Греко-Католицька Церква  
Святого Йоана Хрестителя  
St. John the Baptizer  
Ukrainian Greco-Catholic Church**

4400 Palm Avenue  
La Mesa, CA 91941  
Parish Office: (619) 697-5085

**Website:** [stjohnthebaptizer.org](http://stjohnthebaptizer.org)

**Pastor:** Fr. James Bankston

[frjames@mac.com](mailto:frjames@mac.com)

Fr. James' cell phone: (619) 905-5278

**Deacon:** Fr. Deacon Frank Avant

[fhavant@mac.com](mailto:fhavant@mac.com)

Fr. Dcn Frank's cell phone: (760) 805-1667

***Our Venerable Father Theodosius, Founder of the Common Life***

Born at Garissus, Cappadocia, Saint Theodosius went on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, stopping to see Saint Simeon Stylites, and then entered a monastery under one Longinus. Theodosius was appointed head of a church near Bethlehem but left to become a hermit on a neighboring mountainside and soon attracted many disciples, whom he organized into a community of hermits and built a monastery for them at Cathismus near Bethlehem.

He built three hospices for the sick, the aged, and the mentally disturbed, organized his community according to four language groups that were prevalent among his monks, and was appointed head of cenobites living in Palestine by Patriarch Sallust of Jerusalem – for which reason Theodosius is called the

“Cenobiarch.” With Saint Sabbas, Theodosius opposed the attempts of Emperor Anastasius to spread Eutychianism (a form of Monophysitism that insisted that Christ had one nature, the divine, eliminating the reality of the human nature of Christ, thus negating the possibility of humanity being saved through Christ's death).

Theodosius' preaching against that heresy all over Palestine led to his exile by the Emperor. Theodosius was recalled by Emperor Justin soon after Anastasius' death and was ill the last years of his life. He reposed in the year 529 on January 11, having lived 103 years.

**For more information on Eastern spirituality, visit  
[www.mytheosis.com](http://www.mytheosis.com)**