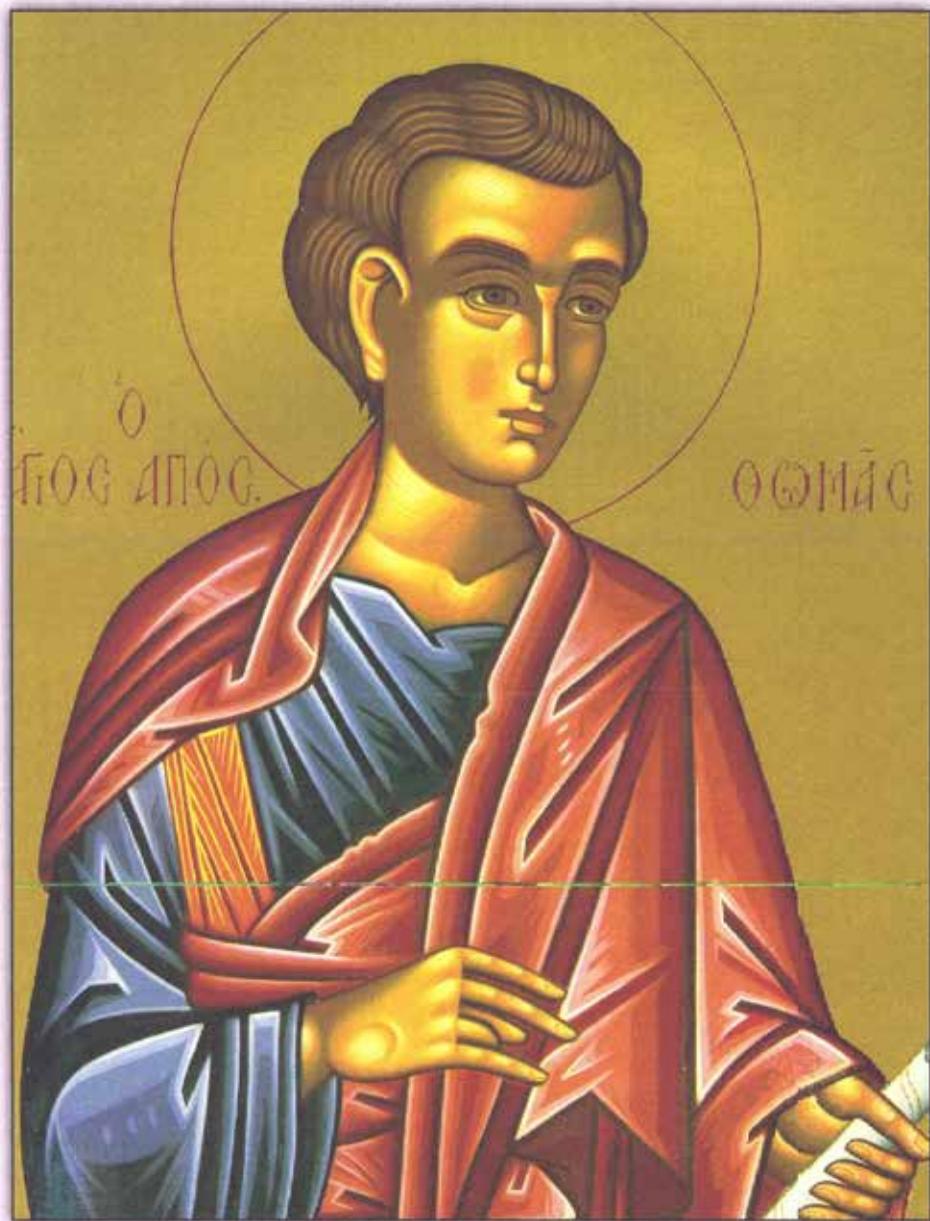


TWENTIETH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST



Icon of the Holy Apostle Thomas -- October 6th

October 6, 2013
20TH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST – TONE 3
THE HOLY AND GLORIOUS APOSTLE THOMAS

SCHEDULE OF SERVICES FOR THE WEEK OF OCTOBER 7 – OCTOBER 13

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 12 – THE HOLY MARTYR CHARITINA

6:00 PM – Great Vespers for Sunday (*satisfies for Sunday obligation*)

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 13 – 21ST SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST; SUNDAY OF THE FATHERS OF THE SEVENTH ECUMENICAL COUNCIL; THE HOLY MARTYRS CARPUS, BISHOP OF THYATIRA; PAPYLAS, HIS DEACON; AGATHONICA, SISTER OF PAPYLAS; AND AGATHODORUS, THEIR SERVANT

9:30 AM – Divine Liturgy

For All Parishioners

Празник – Parish Feast

Today, after the Divine Liturgy there will be a with a festive luncheon to celebrate the feast of Покрова – The Holy Protection of the Mother of God. Tickets will be available in the church hall after Divine Liturgy. Ticket prices: Adults - \$15.00; children (11-17) - \$8.00; children 10 and under – Free. Thank you to all the dedicated volunteers who made today’s luncheon possible. God bless you for your generosity.

Professional Directory

As part of the parish directory which is being prepared, we wish to include professional information for our parishioners so that we all know who we should be supporting with our business. If you wish to have your information included, please fill out the form available in the church hall.

October Birthdays:

- Andriy Ivasyk - 10/01
- Luke Miller – 10/02
- Erin Avant - 10/06
- Olga Gerega - 10/14
- Joseph Hartman - 10/18
- Mark Lozovyj - 10/28
- Yosyp Lyudera - 10/28
- Christia Bankston - 10/29

Sunday offering for September 29

Amount	Number
\$10.00	3
\$20.00	1
\$21.00	1 (loose)
\$30.00	1
\$40.00	2
\$100.00	2
\$200.00	1
<u>\$250.00</u>	<u>1</u>
\$831.00	

Parishioner Total: \$831.00

Average / parish household (42): \$19.79

Weekly Stewardship Goal: \$2125.00

Shortfall: **-\$1294.00**

On Church Growth

The Church is not simply a building or edifice, nor is it an organization or institutional structure. It is essentially a community of people who are to be of God and imbued with His Spirit.

In the words of St. John Chrysostom, “*The Church is a community made up of the souls of us men and cannot be built by stone and mortar, but must be built by the spiritual growth of its members into the full reality of Jesus Christ.*”

This is what Church growth is all about and how we must understand it.

WHAT IS WORSHIP FOR? PART 1

Frederica Mathewes-Green

Wednesday, September 18, 2013

A pastor in the UK wrote me asking, “What is worship for?” He said that his denomination was encouraging pastors to make worship more “user-friendly” in order to attract new members, and that this initially seemed to him a reasonable evangelistic strategy. A scripture cited in support of this approach was Acts 15:19, “We should not trouble those of the Gentiles who turn to God.” But as he read this scripture in context, it looked to him like it was written of people who were already Christian believers, and would not be required to accept Jewish practices. It didn’t address the case of people entirely outside the faith. He wrote to ask, “Who are church services for? Believers or unbelievers?”

I replied:

It sounds like you are already approaching the answer, that in the Scriptures (and through church history) worship was intended to be *worship*. It was aimed at God, in adoration and supplication, not at attracting non-believers, or even at giving fellow-worshippers a good worship experience. This focus on God was the case until very recently; now our immersion in a consumer economy has led us to think of everything in terms of appealing to potential customers. We are so mentally saturated in advertising that we have come to think of ourselves and our faith as products that need to be persuasively sold.

That’s how worship gets redirected from the Lord to outsiders, who have no ability yet to understand or respect Him. The church becomes an organization that is primarily occupied with planning a billboard, because the most important goal is to capture non-believers’ attention. When someone responds to a billboard and becomes a member of the community, he discovers that he has joined an organization that — is planning a billboard. The main goal of members of a church is to attract more members to the church. It’s like Ponzi scheme.

In the Scriptures worship is directed to God, not to anyone on earth, not even to other worshippers. It is certainly not directed to people who don’t yet love and respect our Lord; in fact it should be expected that our worship will be unfamiliar, perplexing, and mysterious to them. In worship we focus on Him, and those who don’t yet see Him just won’t be able to grasp it. It’s appropriate that outsiders not understand what is going on. It’s appropriate that they don’t immediately get it. But they can see that the worshippers take it very seriously, and that they really believe God is present and hearing their prayers. That kind of worship is in itself powerfully compelling, and has its own magnetic pull.

This strikes a very different note than what we experience in our daily lives, which is so thoroughly devoted to attracting consumers, and desperately obsequious and silly in that pursuit. This seriousness of purpose strikes a very different note, and the fact that non-believers can’t immediately grasp what’s going on communicates a truth in itself.

Even for us worshippers, the focus is still on God, not each other. It is like a circle of friends who make up a string quartet. The four of them might come together in a living room for an evening to play the music they love. The bond between them is strong, and their community is a beautiful thing. But they don’t focus on each other, or the community they share, and there is no outside audience. They are focused on the music; they are trying to make the most beautiful music they can.

In this analogy you can see how the false division often cited about worship, that it is either casual or formal, falls away. Though they greatly enjoy playing this music, they don’t do it in a casual way; they take seriously the work involved, and strive to do their best. On the other hand, they don’t behave in a fussy and formal way, either. They aren’t self-

conscious, as if they were trying to impress a human audience. It's not a performance. Their whole heart and attention is directly engaged with the goal of creating beautiful music.

Worship ought to be as beautiful as we can make it, for God gave Moses very demanding instructions for worship, with very expensive elements: gold, jewels, embroidery, and incense. These were extravagant requirements for people who were refugees, wandering in the desert and living in tents. But even then the beauty of worship was a priority. Beauty affects us in ways we barely recognize. It opens our hearts. God required, and deserves, the greatest beauty we can create. But in the midst of beautiful worship we don't have to be stiff and self-conscious. Great beauty and natural, joyous behavior are not opposites; we experience how they go together when we attend a wedding reception, or a big family dinner on Christmas.

Of course, the analogy to the quartet breaks down in that they are focused on the music, but worshippers' focus is not on worship, but on God. Worship is not a performance. It is not entertainment. It is not advertising. Worship is work, as the Bible-Greek word *leitourgia*, liturgy, shows; it is "the work of the people."

We undertake this work as members of a vast community, going back to those instructions to Moses thousands of years ago. We are responsible to continue that worship and pass it on with all the seriousness and beauty it deserves. We offer this worship as transitory place-holders, striving to doing it as well as those before us did, and those after us will do. Our eyes are fixed on the Lord who receives our worship.

If, instead, we focus on attracting outsiders, it will feel to them like every other advertising pitch they encounter. The church can never compete with the world when it comes to entertainment. The world can give them more enjoyable diversions than we can, and can do it without requiring them to leave the house on Sunday morning. If we are successful in attracting people to the church on the basis of fun and entertainment, we're guilty of false advertising, for Christ promises us nothing in this life but a cross. But if we worship with whole-hearted focus on God, they will see something they encounter nowhere else in their lives. They may not at first see Christ, but they can see that we see something, and that gives them something to think about; that's how faith begins.

WHAT IS WORSHIP FOR? PART 2

Frederica Mathewes-Green

Wednesday, September 19, 2013

Yesterday I wrote on "What is Worship For?", but I forgot to answer the question. I said that it is not the time for evangelism, and shouldn't be designed with non-believers in mind. But what is it *for*?

Worship is for God; we could expand that and say worship is for believers to offer to God. But even once we're clear that worship is the work of the believing community, there's a possible confusion. We might think the purpose of worship is to *give believers a good worship experience*.

This is subtle, because a worship leader might think the best way to worship is to arrange the songs and other elements to move and inspire

worshippers, who will then turn whole-heartedly to God. In fact, that might sound like exactly what worship is supposed to do. But it's another mis-direction. It leaves us focused on the process inside the worshipper, instead of on God.

In the first place, this is manipulative; it makes the hour of worship a process imposed on churchgoers, aimed at directing their thoughts and emotions into the right channels. People can usually sense when they're being manipulated. Men, especially, hate to have their emotions tampered with, and I expect this is a reason most congregations are predominantly female, and we assume that women are more religious

than men are (though that's obviously not the case with conservative varieties of Islam and Judaism).

I recall a chapel service at a Christian college where two girls with guitars were leading the audience in a hymn that featured the line, "I lay my head upon his chest." Every time that line came around, the male professors near me would just stop singing.

But some people might actually like this focus on their worship experience, feeling that it's appropriate for churches to serve their preferences, just like restaurants do. Church-shopping is common, as people sample many different churches in their search for the one that feels best. Unfortunately, the church that feels most comfortable is not the one that will challenge you. We are called to deep change, transformation in Christ, and the hard work of overcoming the poison of habitual sin. If you search till you find a church that feels just right, it's likely to reinforce you as you already are.

A focus on the worshipper also burdens him, because it means worship succeeds or fails based on how he feels. He can look around during a hymn and notice others who look moved or inspired, while he himself feels nothing. He wonders if there is something wrong with him. Maybe his faith is too weak; maybe God has rejected him. Since the general mood during worship is upbeat (except for those times everyone is directed to be serious instead), the person who comes in feeling less than chipper will know that good manners requires holding it in. Church-time can come to seem very artificial. When you're worried or sad it's painful to be around happy people. Singing a hymn about how God takes care of me when I'm sad doesn't really help.

I got an email this morning from a person who said he attended a church meeting where one of the newer leaders wanted to remove the Creed and the general confession from the Sunday service, because they were a "turn off." This led to a discussion of the purpose of worship, and he said that, for him, it was about "alignment."

In worship he comes into the presence of God, and is lined up with him, so to speak. In our daily lives we turn away from God through our anxieties and temptations; our attention is scattered in all different directions. In worship, as we face the Lord, we are brought into right order with him.

This alignment is like what happens to a steel needle when it is brought into contact with a magnet. When the needle is manufactured it's not magnetic, because the atoms inside are pointing in all different direction. But when the needle is touched by a magnet, those atoms begin to turn. They become aligned as the magnet is; they become magnets themselves.

When we are thus aligned with God we are made one with him, transformed by his power. We don't just become *like* him, in a superficial or analogical way; we actually become bearers of his presence, as the Burning Bush was filled with fire.

My correspondent wrote that, while describing this process, he said, "I speak the ancient words" of the liturgy. That's a potential complication. In churches where the tradition is to put worship together almost from scratch every week, the authority for that worship resides in the pastor and worship leaders. Its depth is limited to the depth of their own wisdom, insight, and prayer life. Liturgical churches simply have an advantage here, because they don't have to generate the content of their worship. The ancient liturgies still exist, and some churches have never stopped using them for all 2000 years. The Orthodox Eucharistic service is like a rack railway, one that is designed to climb a mountain. I can get on the train on Sunday morning, and it will carry me all the way to the top. It doesn't matter whether I have emotions about worship or not; the Liturgy itself does the work.

As I said, this is more complicated for churches with a tradition of assembling the worship service new each week, but that does give you the freedom to try out the ancient prayers and services. They're can be found in books and on

line. I think it is less successful to just stick in a few ancient prayers, because you're not wise enough to be an editor of those ancient texts; but if that is all you can do, it's still something.

Years ago I met a young woman who told me she attended "the Celtic service at the First Baptist Church." When I did a double-take she said, "The Boomers want a contemporary service, with rock music and all, but the young people, of course, want something more traditional." They had located ancient Celtic prayers via the internet and were worshipping with vestments, candles, and incense (until the smoke alarm gave them too much trouble).

One thing that surprised me after I became Eastern Orthodox was that there was far less emphasis on believers being united *with each other* in worship. Previously, the prayers and hymns about communion were all about community. Now, they're about the power of Christ's presence in the sacrament and my unworthiness and unpreparedness to receive it. Communion *does* unites me to other worshippers, of course, but the understanding that the bread and wine really become Christ's Body and Blood push other thoughts to the side.

I should clarify that I'm not recommending that go back to worship styles and hymns of a few decades or a century ago. That's still a part of the culture we inhabit today, and it's probably not disruptive or challenging enough to make a difference. Worship from thousands of years ago, from entirely different languages and cultures, has more of a chance of shaking you up.

Finally I have to ask, to what extent is worship supposed to teach the faithful? The Orthodox liturgies and prayers are full of meaty content, apparently intending that worshippers will understand and remember it, and not designed solely to glorify God. If you imagine that you were an illiterate peasant 1500 years ago, about the only time you would hear the scriptures would be during worship. The icons on the walls would serve as a picture bible, presenting the important scenes of bible and

church history. The worship experience—the embroidery, incense, vestments, jewels and so forth—would be the most beautiful thing you encountered all week. Since everything is set to music, you can take it with you, and bring it to mind during the week. Some of the more important prayers are sung three times. We learned our ABCs by singing them over and over, and we learn church history and theology the same way.

I'm always impressed, on the Sunday of the Fathers of the First Ecumenical Council, at the amount of detail the hymns give us in describing the heresy of Arius, the arguments against him, and even his miserable end (he went into an outhouse and, it sounds like, exploded—yes, we sing even about this). We're not singing these things in order to inform God about it. It must be intended to teach worshippers history and theology that they should know.

Likewise, it is right that there be a sermon or homily expounding the day's scripture readings. An ancient practice is the moment when worshippers greet each other with a holy kiss—we see this referenced in St. Paul's letters. So having insisted all this time that worship ought to be directed to God, I must admit that some elements teach and inform worshippers as well.

With that allowance, however, we still must answer the question "What is worship for?" with "Worship is for God." We need to worship God, because it puts us in right "alignment" with him. God doesn't need our worship; God doesn't need anything the human race can offer. But when we drift from him we become scattered and confused. Worship brings us before our Creator, the only source of love that is worthy of the name. The more we focus on him alone, forgetting about ourselves, the more we will be healed.

Articles originally appeared on Frederica.com (<http://www.frederica.com/>).

This coming **Tuesday, 10/8/2013**, the FOCUS Dinner for our homeless/needly brothers and sisters at God's Extended Hand (1625 Island Ave SD 92101) is to be prepared and served by a team of volunteers from Sts. Constantine & Helen and St. Spyridon Churches, as well as students from St. Katherine College.

People from any parishes are welcome!

God's Extended Hand

FOCUS San Diego Dinners: If we don't gather teams of people to open God's Extended Hand (1625 Island Ave SD 92101) and prepare and serve dinner, many poor & homeless people will go without dinner! YOUR HELP IS NEEDED for:

- Food Prep & Cooking (4-6 people):
2:00-6:30 PM,
- Doorman & Floorman (2 trained men, & 1 or 2 others who want to learn):
4:00-7:15 PM
- Serving & Clean Up (8-10 people):
6:20-8:00 PM.

For more info, or to volunteer, please contact Patty: pattydiaz@focusna.org or 858-679-9283. You may also contact Fr. James. May God bless you for giving of your time and energy for His work!

A Reminder: FOCUS 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.

If You Want LEAVE Then Must Try This
I urgently needed a few days off work, but I knew the Boss would not allow me to take a leave.

I thought that maybe if I acted "CRAZY" then he would tell me to take a few days off.

So I hung upside down on the ceiling and made funny noises.

My co-worker asked me what I was doing?

I told her that I was pretending to be a light bulb so that the Boss would think I was "CRAZY" and give me a few days off.

A few minutes later the Boss came into the office and asked "What are you doing?" I told him I was a light bulb.

He said "You are clearly stressed out. Go home and recuperate for a couple of days."

I jumped down and walked out of the office.

When my co-worker followed me, the Boss asked her "And where do you think you're going?"

She said, "I'm going home too, I can't work in the dark!"

Warm Welcome!

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

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>

Last Sunday's Bulletin

If you haven't yet picked up last Sunday's bulletin, it is available in the church hall, or on our website, stjohnthebaptizer.org.



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

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

Website: stjohnthebaptizer.org

Pastor: Fr. James Bankston
frjames@mac.com

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

St. Thomas the Apostle

Poor Thomas! He made one remark and has been branded as “Doubting Thomas” ever since. But if he doubted, he also believed. He made what is certainly the most explicit statement of faith in the New Testament: “My Lord and My God!” (see John 20:24-28) and, in so expressing his faith, gave Christians a prayer that will be said till the end of time. He also occasioned a compliment from Jesus to all later Christians: “Have you come to believe because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and have believed” (John 20:29).

Thomas should be equally well known for his courage. Perhaps what he said was impetuous – since he ran, like the rest, at the showdown – but he can scarcely have been insincere when he expressed his willingness to die with Jesus. The occasion was when Jesus proposed to go to

Bethany after Lazarus had died. Since Bethany was near Jerusalem, this meant walking into the very midst of His enemies and to almost certain death. Realizing this, Thomas said to the other apostles, “Let us also go to die with him” (John 11:16b).

Thomas shares the lot of Peter the impetuous, James and John, the “sons of thunder,” Philip and his foolish request to see the Father – indeed all the apostles in their weakness and lack of understanding. We must not exaggerate these facts, however, for Christ did not pick worthless men. But their human weakness again points up the fact that holiness is a gift of God, not a human creation; it is given to ordinary men and women with weaknesses; it is God who gradually transforms the weaknesses into the image of Christ, the courageous, trusting and loving one.