

SUNDAY OF ZACCHAEUS



Icon of Christ and Zacchaeus



January 18, 2015

TONE 7

SUNDAY OF ZACCHAEUS

OUR HOLY FATHERS ATHANASIUS AND CYRIL, ARCHBISHOPS OF ALEXANDRIA

SCHEDULE OF SERVICES FOR THE WEEK OF JANUARY 19 – JANUARY 25

SATURDAY, JANUARY 24

6:00 PM – Great Vespers.

SUNDAY, JANUARY 25 – *SUNDAY OF THE PUBLICAN AND PHARISEE (BEGINNING OF THE LENTEN TRIODION); OUR HOLY FATHER GREGORY THE THEOLOGIAN, ARCHBISHOP OF CONSTANTINOPLE*

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!*

Welcome!

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

“Culture today is becoming politicized. The State is extending dominance over areas outside its province, family, education and the soul. It is concentrating public opinion in fewer and fewer hands, which becomes the more dangerous because of the mechanical way in which propaganda can be disseminated. It seeks to achieve its ends by extra parliamentary means. The idea of a community of workers is replaced by mass cooperation on a non-personal basis, contract has taken the place of responsibility. The lines are becoming clear cut.”

Archbishop Fulton Sheen
(Characters of the Passion)

Sunday offering for January 11

Amount	Number
\$15.00	2
\$20.00	4
\$30.00	1
\$40.00	2
\$50.00	2
\$75.00	1
\$80.00	1
\$150.00	1
\$300.00	1
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\$925.00	

Parishioner Total: \$925.00

Average / parish household (42): \$11.42

Weekly Stewardship Goal: \$2125.00

Deficit: **(\$1200.00)**

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

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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

FATHER PRIME

Wishing and Working For a World Transformed.

Monday, January 12, 2015

<http://fatherprime.blogspot.com/2015/01/what-does-god-deserve.html?m=1>

What Does God Deserve?

When a plan to sub for one of my Episcopal colleagues fell through, I decided to attend this beautiful church; one of my students at the University of Kentucky is Orthodox and had invited me to attend anytime I wanted. (That's called *evangelism*, folks!)

As I stood for the Divine Liturgy—there is no sitting during Orthodox worship—I was moved, both by the chants of the priest and choir, as well as the devotion and care that went into this celebration of the oldest and holiest of Christian services. I found a sense of peace and comfort in this service that my tradition calls Holy Eucharist, Mass, or simply Communion.

I took in all of the incense, watched parishioners venerate their icons. It was all for the glory of God. **Did God need it all? Of course not. But God deserved it.** God deserves everything we can possibly give God, in our worship and our day-to-day lives. Go big or go home, right? I wonder sometimes if we Christians have forgotten that. I wonder if we have become complacent, even lazy, in expressing our faith.

The Divine Liturgy that day lasted two hours—at least one hour longer than almost every Episcopalian would say

a Eucharistic service should last. The people in that space took great care with every cross and every genuflection. Even after the service was over and the priest had made the announcements, the people lined up single file to venerate an icon in the center of the worship space. Nobody was in a hurry. Everyone there knew that he or she was in the midst of the holy. **Everyone had taken a step out of time into a sacred space that did not seem the least bit concerned with the outside world around them.** This was devotion in its purest, most beautiful form.

As folks filed downstairs to a hearty lunch, I spent time with the priest. During the liturgy he had been decked out in an assortment of vestments (cassock, pectoral cross, sticharion, epimanikia, epitachelion, zone, and phelonion), and as I had watched him celebrate I wondered about my own tradition. How many of my colleagues have I witnessed who have complained about doing so much as wearing a clerical collar? How many would look at this and say that it was overkill?

After lunch we sat and talked, he in his cassock, collar, and pectoral cross, and me in my civilian clothes. As I walked to the car to head home a thought hit

me: we've become lazy. We have forgotten that **being a Christian takes intentionality, it takes work.** It begins with something as simple as priests deciding that all of those aforementioned vestments are just too uncomfortable, too hot, and so they get simplified. **But where does it stop?** I have been in churches where leadership has talked about not wanting to keep people too long for worship. **Really?!** We're actually willing to shorten our worship, which is supposed to be about God and not ourselves? **Before we realize it our very lives become lip service, and we lose sight of who we really are. We lose our identity.**

I went to a bar a few days later. The bar that stands across the road from a huge megachurch, and as I sat there, again in civilian clothes, the bartender was having a conversation with a couple sitting near me. They were talking about how hypocritical churches and their pastors are, how all they care about is money and maintaining their image. The bartender pined, "I wonder if any pastors actually believe in God." I sat there in silence as he launched into a litany of things **Christians have neglected—the care of the poor, the respect of those with whom they disagree, the message of love that Jesus gave.** He concluded his homily by telling us that he had actually pondered becoming a pastor, but when he saw how Christians were not living up to the very standards they had set, he knew he couldn't do it.

Standards. What kind have we set for ourselves and our communities? We talk about church as though it were a glorified country club that sometimes mentions Jesus. We worry about butts in the pews and bucks in the plate, rather than making disciples and **cultivating relationships with the living God.** We worry about being comfortable, in the manners in which we both dress and preach. Are we really being authentic when we neglect the standards upon which our faith was grounded?

I greatly admire our Orthodox brothers and sisters. They know who they are. They live into it each and every day. They realize that being a Christian is not meant to be easy; it takes work, dedication, and a willingness to get uncomfortable. While I may not be wearing a pectoral cross or phelonian the next time I celebrate Mass, I do pray that I may be authentic. I pray we all may be authentic. **Don't stray from what our faith asks of us just because it makes us a little uncomfortable. It is a slippery slope** that leads to making cynics like that bartender, rather than authentic followers of the Lord Jesus.

Let's take our faith seriously. No, God doesn't NEED it. But God certainly DESERVES it.

"I don't believe that good work is ever done in a hurry."

*- C.S. Lewis
The C.S. Lewis Bible*

Living Correctly in Outrageous Times

By Fr. Ernesto Obregon in The Sounding myocn.net/living-correctly-outrageous-times/
Jan 12, 2015

To say that we live in an increasingly violent world is true. And, yet, the USA itself has seen crime statistics continue to go down for the last several years. From 1993-2013, violent crime statistics continued to go down. For instance, in 1993, there were about 750 violent crimes per 100,000 people. By 2013, the violent crime rate had dropped to about 350 violent crimes per 100,000 people. The 2014 figures are not in yet. In spite of that, most Americans believe that violent crime is increasing in the USA.

Who can remember Ebola? That was a pre-election phenomena promulgated by false news media science and false pronouncements, particularly by self-described experts. It led to a fear wave that reminds me of the over-reactions to the Orson Wells radio broadcast of “*War of the Worlds*,” which also caused panic in various areas of this country. American citizens mistreated their fellow American citizens while calling it “reasonable” precautions. When a court found at least one of the restrictions to be illegal, Americans, by a wide majority, were upset with the court.

C.S. Lewis reminded us in *Screwtape Letters* that evil does its best work when there is misinformation being believed. The two paragraphs above give examples of “false evidence appearing real.” The availability of “information” on the Internet, on cable news networks, on radio talk shows, on TV editorial shows, means that people can read or hear about every possible odd interpretation on people and events. The problem is that there is so much “information” flowing around that accurate information is hidden and overwhelmed by the avalanche of both shoddy thinking and deliberate lies. In my opinion, one of the most dangerous of the current phenomena on the internet is the proliferation of mini-organizations who “publish” a site with a name

that makes it sound like a legitimate news organization. These sites then promptly publish either false information or put false headlines on barely true “articles” in order to influence you politically, or get you to be outraged, etc.

So, what are we to do with all this? How do we keep ourselves from being influenced by false evidence appearing real? There is some advice given to us in Scripture and Tradition.

“Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus,” (Phil. 4:6-7, NKJV).

“Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things,” (1 Cor. 13:4-7, NKJV).

“The waters have risen and severe storms are upon us, but we do not fear drowning, for we stand firmly upon a rock. Let the sea rage, it cannot break the rock. Let the waves rise, they cannot sink the boat of Jesus. What are we to fear? Death? Life to me means Christ, and death is gain. Exile? ‘The earth and its fullness belong to the Lord.’ The confiscation of goods? We brought nothing into this world, and we shall surely take nothing from it. I have only contempt for the world’s threats, I find its blessings laughable. I have no fear of poverty, no desire for wealth. I am not afraid of death nor do I long to live, except for your good. I concentrate therefore on the present situation, and I urge you, my friends, to have confidence. ... I have his promise; I am surely not going to rely on my own strength! I have

what he has written; that is my staff, my security, my peaceful harbor. Let the world be in upheaval. I hold to his promise and read his message; that is my protecting wall and garrison. What message? 'Know that I am with you always, until the end of the world!'" (Whom shall I fear? – John Chrysostom).

There is a way to avoid being dragged around by the false evidence appearing real that is so being “marketed” in the USA. There is a way to avoid reacting to the various “news” articles that try to pull us to wrong conclusions. But, it requires prayer and an attitude change.

First, as with Saints Paul and Chrysostom, we need to remind ourselves that God is with us always. No matter what happens to us, we have the security of God’s presence and that God will receive us into his Kingdom at the end. Notice that I do not say that evil things will never happen to us. Rather, I am saying that we are accompanied through our journey and have a Father waiting for us at the end of it.

Second, we need to remember that our calling is to express the love of God into this world. Stories that deliberately stir our outrage work against our calling. Going to websites whose purpose is to tell us the “real truth” and to convince us to angrily rise up against [fill in the blank], is asking to have our calling and our attitude damaged. It would be wiser to stay away from them, particularly as the chances are that they do not tell you the “real truth.”

Third, we need to exercise a certain degree of wisdom. If we read or hear a story that appears either too good to be true or too horrible to be believed, the chances are that it is not true and should not be believed. It is one thing to have faith in what has been revealed. It is another thing to be a fool who is easily taken in. “Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world,” (1 John 4:1, NKJV). When you read such a story, please check it out. I recommend websites such as

www.snopes.com. As Scripture says, “test the spirits,” check out the story.

Fourth, “Love ... does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil” Our attitude ought to be one of practical love. This means that our behavior toward others needs to be above reproach. To disagree respectfully is not a modern, politically correct attitude, but a virtue promoted by Saint Paul, who counseled that we should not “behave rudely.” The verse quoted above continues from “thinks no evil” to encouraging us to hope all things and believe all things. Often when we read a particularly “outrage-inducing” story, we might consider whether we need to take a step back and truly have an attitude that someone is innocent until proven guilty. Read more evidence, consider other viewpoints. Engage in practical love.

Finally, prayer and fasting are most certainly the oldest bulwarks that are counseled for our spiritual health. Spend some time in prayer with the Lord. Intercede for those that trouble you and for those situations that arouse concern or outrage in you. Please do not pray that God will show them the error of their way. That is not intercessory prayer. That is merely asking God to confirm your opinion of someone else’s life. Rather, pray that God will reach out to them. Pray that God will bless them. Pray that God will embrace them as the Father embraced the Prodigal Son. Notice that the promise of the verse is not that matters will change, but rather that the peace of God which surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and your minds through Jesus Christ.

So, as we have celebrated Theophany, and as we are already looking ahead to Lent, let us learn to practice spiritual discernment and practical love. Let us not give in to false evidence appearing real, but worse, let us not give in to hate of others. We have a witness to maintain.

Posted by the Orthodox Christian Network. You can find the Orthodox Christian Network on Google+

A Meditation on MLK Jr, the Sanctity of Life, and Our Own Cowardice

By Rev. Anthony Perkins in The Sounding

<http://myocn.net/meditation-mlk-jr-sanctity-life-cowardice/>

Jan 13, 2015

The Lord God stands in the midst of the Divine Council and judges among the gods. “How long will you rule unjustly, and show partiality to the wicked? Defend the poor and fatherless, maintain the rights of the afflicted and the destitute. Rescue the weak and needy; deliver them from the hand of the wicked.” (Psalm 81:1-4; this is the first Psalm we sing to proclaim the Resurrection on Holy Saturday)

One of the things that we often forget is how incredibly offensive the civil rights protests were to many Americans (not just to Southerners – there was plenty of outrage elsewhere!). But it was right and just to cause offense because the status-quo was wicked. What truths are we afraid to proclaim, not out of fear of arrest, lynching, or assassination, but out of fear of offending someone’s feelings or going against the politics of our community? Just how deep does our cowardice go? Which side are we on, exactly?

We are like the gods the Lord condemned in the midst of His council. We have failed to defend even the most vulnerable among us. Who is more vulnerable than our children? And what do we – the citizen-rulers of this country – do to protect them? One out of every five is intentionally put to death before birth (more than a million a year). Of the children we allow to see the light of day, one out of every three lives in a home without a father (24 million), and one out of five lives in poverty/“food insecurity” (16 million). [And don’t even get me started on unnecessary wars, an inconsistent justice system, creeping totalitarianism, and atheistic fervor.] All of these do injustice to the sanctity of life and the dignity of persons we are supposed to love.

These are not political issues; they are moral ones. Our apathetic indulgence of such a demonic system shows just how little we have done to become perfect as God is perfect through Jesus Christ. We are not just called to do good when it is convenient or when it matches our political convictions or personal opinions – but every second of every day. We are called to live and suffer for what is holy, right and true; even to die for it if need be. Instead, we excuse injustice with clever words (e.g. “choice”, “freedom”, “necessity”, and “economics” – both liberals and conservatives have them). Even if we have not participated in this wicked system, what have we done to oppose it? To ameliorate its terrible consequences? Have we cared for the fatherless? Supported the single mother? Healed the mother who has aborted her child? Have we taught the youth of our country (and the children in our families) the truth about chastity, marriage, and the value of human life? If not, how are we going to break this cycle?

We must repent, we must pray, and most of all, we must serve.

To quote an article by Andrew Estocin; “Martin Luther King Jr. and Archbishop Iakovos [who marched with him] both knew that the human person as the image and likeness of God was a truth worth breaking the law, fighting and (in Rev. King’s case) ultimately dying for. Orthodoxy in America needs this type of courage today more than ever.”

We may need that, but my fear is that we have become a nation of self-indulgent cowards. I would love to be proven wrong.

Posted by the Orthodox Christian Network. You can find the Orthodox Christian Network on Google+



**Українська Греко-Католицька Церква
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Welcome Christ in Your Hearts and Homes

The Lord, who already welcomed Zacchaeus in his heart, was now ready to be welcomed by him in his house. He said, "Zacchaeus, hurry up and come down, since I have to stay in your house." He thought it was a marvelous piece of good luck to see Christ. While imagining it was a marvelous piece of good luck quite beyond words to see him passing by, he was suddenly found worthy to have him in his house. Grace is poured out, and faith starts working through love.

Christ, who was already dwelling in his heart, is welcomed into his house. Zacchaeus says to Christ, "Lord, half my goods I give to the poor, and if I have cheated anyone of

anything, I am paying back four times over." It is as if he were saying, "The reason I am keeping back half for myself is not in order to have it, but to have something from which to pay people back."

There you are. That is really what welcoming Jesus means, welcoming him into your heart. Christ was already there. He was in Zacchaeus and spoke through him. The apostle says that this is what it means, "For Christ to dwell by faith in your hearts" (Eph 3:17).

St. Augustine

**For more information on Eastern spirituality, visit
www.mytheosis.com**