

TWELFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST



Icon of the Beheading of Saint John the Baptist -- August 29

Generations of Faith

The Exaltation of the Precious and Life-Giving Cross

Our first Generations of Faith gathering for the new liturgical year will be on Sunday, September 13th. There will be a Pot-Luck after the Divine Liturgy and the learning session in which we will examine the importance of the Cross in the early Christian's life and in our life. Also, we will identify ways they can honor Christ's sacrifice and the cross by helping people who are suffering and carrying their own crosses today.

Come in Love

God, who "wishes all to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth," shows the most perfect and blessed way of salvation – I mean the way of love.

For some there is salvation by fear: we contemplate the threat of punishment in hell and so avoid evil. But the person who is hastening to spiritual perfection rejects fear. Such a disposition is servile, and the person with this disposition does not remain with the master out of love. He stays put out of fear of being scourged.

Then, there are those who conduct themselves virtuously out of the hope of a reward for a life piously lived. They do not possess the good out of love but out of the expectation of recompense.

But the person seeking perfection disdains even rewards: he does not prefer the gift to the one who bestows it. He loves, "with his whole heart and soul and strength," him who is the source of all good things. This, then, is the attitude which he commands to the souls of all who listen to him, for he summons us to share his own life.

St Gregory of Nyssa

Summer Liturgical Schedule (July – September) (unless otherwise noted in the bulletin):

Sundays 9:00 AM (Bi-Lingual)

Holyday Vigil: 6:00 PM

Holyday Liturgy: 9:00 AM

Other Services as announced in Bulletin

The Holy Mystery of Reconciliation

(Confession): Sundays from 8:30 to 8:45 AM and also by appointment.

The Holy Mysteries of Initiation (Baptism, Chrismation and Holy Eucharist): Parents must make arrangements with the Pastor at least 3 months prior to Initiation. Adults seeking to be initiated must undergo a period of instruction (Catechumenate.)

The Holy Mystery of Crowning (Marriage): The couple must contact the Pastor at least 6 months prior to the desired date of marriage and **before** scheduling anything related to the crowning (including the reception.) Couples must participate in pre-marriage catechesis.

The Holy Mystery of Anointing of the Sick: Please inform the Pastor of anyone in need of anointing or anyone homebound and unable to attend Liturgy or receive Holy Eucharist.

Catechesis: Contact the Pastor.

Cantors: Vladimir Bachynsky, Luke Miller and Olena Bankston

The Great Litany

Having declared our defiance of the world in the opening benediction, we now take our first step together in the journey, the great litany. We call it the “great” litany not just because of its length, but also because it sums up the totality of our needs. The Church here sweeps up the whole world in its great and loving arms, and offers it up to God to be blessed and sanctified and saved. The job of a priest is to offer sacrifice, and the Church, as God’s royal priesthood, offers the world back to God.

In this intercessory offering, the Church leaves out no aspect of human existence. The Church surveys all the earth with its swarming, teeming activity and toil and offers it up to the Lord.

“In peace let us pray to the Lord.” The Church begins by inviting all to pray “in peace,” invoking first of all “the peace from above” and “the salvation of our souls.” Because of this, some call this litany “the peace litany.” Peace is fundamental not only to this prayer, but to all prayer and to the Christian life itself. Without internal peace, we cannot know God, much less come before Him as His priesthood and offer acceptable intercession. (For this reason the faithful exchange “the peace” later in the service before the prayer of the Eucharist, the **anaphora**, is offered.)

Peace is the great and parting gift of Christ to His Church. On His final night with the apostles, the Lord said, “Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you” (John 14:27). Before Christ, warfare raged in the cosmos and in our hearts as well. By His saving death on the Cross and by the shedding of His precious blood, Christ brought peace to all (Col. 1:19-20). By repentance and faith, we enter into this saving peace. We have peace with God, with whom we are now reconciled (Rom. 5:1), and peace with each other as well. Indeed, the more we enter into this peace, the closer we draw to God and the more powerfully He dwells within us. That is why St. Seraphim of Sarov said, “Acquire the Spirit of peace, and thousands will be saved around you.” So before we begin this litany, we are called to enter again into the peace of Christ, casting out from our hearts all distractions, all turmoil and anxiety, and focusing only on Christ. Only then can we stand aright before Him and offer supplication for the needs of all.

Having taken her stand in Christ’s peace, the Church then prays for “the peace of the whole world.” In this petition, the Church beseeches God to “break the bow and cut the spear in two and burn the chariot in the fire,” “scattering the peoples who delight in war” (Ps. 46:9; 68:30). The Church thus supports and undergirds the efforts of all who work for peace in our war-torn world—soldiers, diplomats, aid workers. Those who serve in this challenging and difficult task (made more difficult in days vexed by constant threat of terrorism) may be tempted to discouragement and despair. They may think their work hopeless and beyond their strength. But in this petition, the Church invokes a strength

Anaphora – (literally “offering”) The long prayer which, said by the priest over the gifts of bread and wine, by God’s power transforms them into the Body and Blood of Christ

beyond theirs; and all such workers for peace, whether Christian or not, are helped by the Christian God, the Savior and Lover of all men, and the Giver of peace to His world.

In this litany, the Church also prays for the head of the civil government “and for all civil authorities, and for the armed forces.” That is, she prays for peace at home also, that all those who govern may do so justly and wisely, and that the nation in which the local church finds herself may know tranquility. This indeed is exactly what St. Paul commanded the Church to pray for whenever her members assembled: “I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men, for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence” (1 Tim. 2:1-2). Surveying the political landscape may tempt one at times to give up on politicians and on the political process in general, to say that all politicians are crooks and that voting and civil duty are useless. The Church, in this petition, disagrees. Whatever the weaknesses of politicians and the political process, the proper response is not cynicism and withdrawal, but prayer. For in whatever political system we find ourselves—be it American democracy or Byzantine autocracy or even totalitarian dictatorship—God can use the ruling powers to fulfill His purposes. In the first century, Paul commanded the Church to pray for the ruler of the Roman Empire, saying that God had ordained all these governing authorities (1 Tim. 2:1f; Rom. 13:1ff) and the ruler at that time was the infamous Nero! How much more should we, in our day in the democratic West, pray for our rulers?

In this litany, the Church also prays for “the stability of the holy churches of God and for the unity of all.” It prays for “this holy house and for those who enter with faith, reverence, and the fear of God.” It prays for its local bishop by name, “for the honorable priesthood, the diaconate in Christ, for all the clergy and the people.” In this petition, we see the saving synergy (or cooperation) in action. Of course we must do all we can to help the Church fulfill its mission: we must work for unity among all Orthodox and strive to resolve whatever quarrels threaten to separate us. By patience and goodwill, we must work to make our parishes places of love and mutual support. We must support our clergy, bishops, priests, deacons, and all who do the work of the Church, giving them due honor and supplying their material needs. But for all our efforts, the health of the Church ultimately does not lie with us. It lies with God. That is why we pray for the Church in these petitions, for all our toil will be fruitless if God does not bless it.

The Church also prays for the physical world on which we all depend. We pray for “seasonable weather, for abundance of the fruits of the earth, and for peaceful times” to harvest these gifts. Long before it became fashionable to be “green,” long before journalists spoke about ecology and the environment, long before people began debating about the Kyoto Accord, the Church knew of the importance of soil and weather, of earth and sky. Food does not come from the supermarket, whatever city-dwellers might imagine. It comes from the earth, and its harvest and supply depend on seasonable weather, on rain and sunshine, on freedom from drought and blight and war. Thus our food and welfare come ultimately from God. The Church does not forget this, even though she has always been anchored in the cities and has thrived in them (see the petition about “every city and

countryside,” which shows that the cities were the main centers of the churches). And so the Church, as God’s priesthood for the whole world, lifts this up to God.

In the great litany, the Church also prays for those in special distress and danger: for “travelers by land, by sea, and by air” (in ancient times especially, travel was dangerous), for “the sick and the suffering,” for “captives and their deliverance.” Indeed, the Church prays for our deliverance from “all affliction, wrath, danger, and need.” In earth’s dark and dangerous places, many people think themselves alone and abandoned—the elderly sick woman lying in pain in her small apartment without medical insurance; the Western journalist held captive by terrorists; the young child abused by a family member, frightened and with no one to turn to. But God has not abandoned any of these. The Church is the friend of the world, and it commends all those in need to God, who has revealed Himself as the hope of the hopeless, the protector of widows and the father of orphans. No tear falls that our God does not see, no fear grips the human heart that leaves our God untouched, and the Church intercedes for all those in distress.

To each of these petitions and needs, the faithful lift up the cry, “Lord, have mercy!” (Greek *Kyrie eleison*). Though the English word “mercy” has a rather juridical feel (recalling the plea of a condemned man for mercy and pardon from a judge), the Greek has a wider meaning. In this repeated response, the Church prays not only for pardon, but also for blessing, strength, and rescue, the total outpouring of God’s generosity. The “mercy” we beg is the equivalent of the Hebrew term *hesed*, variously translated not only “mercy” (in the King James Version), but also “steadfast love,” “loving kindness.” In this litany we cry for God’s covenant loyalty, His faithfulness revealed to His children in acts of saving strength. When we pray over and over again, “Lord, have mercy!” we are beseeching the God of our fathers to lift us up from all the pits into which we stumble.

At the culmination of all these petitions, we “commemorate our most holy, most pure, most blessed and glorious Lady Theotokos and ever-virgin Mary, with all the saints.” A Christian in this world never stands before the Lord alone, but always as part of the vast family of God, the Church of Christ. As a family, we rely on the prayers of the rest of the Church—especially the prayers of the holy Theotokos, the first Christian, the one who leads us in the heavenly praises of the Trinity. Our blessed Lady loves us for the sake of her Son, and in her loving intercession we take refuge. In the company of this heavenly throng we “commend ourselves and each other and all our life to Christ our God,” expecting from Him alone the salvation of our souls and the answers to our prayers.

The prayer that currently follows this litany not only asks by a general petition that God would “look down upon us and this holy house with pity” and hear our prayers. Like all prayers, it also sets forth the Church’s theology. The God to whom we pray transcends by far all our puny and inadequate understandings of Him. This prayer describes Him in a series of four negative adjectives: “incomparable, incomprehensible, immeasurable, inexpressible.” This is true *apophatic* theology: God cannot be adequately described; He can only be experienced in wonder. No words can do Him justice, for the God with whom we have to do defies all limitations. We can only stand mute, lost in adoration before God’s power, glory,

mercy, and love for mankind. We rightly trumpet the greatness of God in this prayer, for only a God this great could cradle the world with all its needs, caring for each one.

Unbelievers have long poured scorn on the Church's faith, saying how presumptuous and audacious the Christians are to assert that their little prayers could change the vast universe and its affairs. The unbelievers are correct: our faith is audacious-and true. Having known Him who toppled death from his dark throne and who has "bestowed resurrection on the fallen" (from the **kontakion** of Pascha), we are indeed audacious and bold enough to declare that our God, great enough to hold together the whole universe, still condescends to hear and answer our prayers. He who loved us enough to die and overthrow death also loves us enough to hear us when we call to Him over lesser things.

One final historical note: The great litany originally did not come at this point in the service. Rather, it formed the intercessory prayers of the people after the reading of the lessons and the dismissal of the catechumens. During the ninth century, it came to be offered also right after the so-called "little entrance" with the Gospel book, before the **trisagion**, and was sometimes called the "litany of the trisagion." Around the eleventh century, the Church began to recite it in its present position as well, immediately before the antiphons. Only from the thirteenth century onwards was it recited at its present place and there only. What is the significance of these developments?

I would suggest that this change in position reveals the pastoral heart of the Church. In the present form of the Byzantine Liturgy, the first thing the faithful do when they assemble is to pray for the world. It is as if the Church feels an urgency about the world's needs and cannot wait to run to meet those needs. Before the assembly does anything else-before the initial praises of the antiphons, before the celebrant and people formally greet and bless one another, before the reading of the Holy Scriptures-the Church kneels before the needy of the earth in an intercessory act of *kenosis* (self-emptying) to pray for the whole world. Christ is the Savior of the world and, following her divine Lord, the Church also keeps the whole world close to her heart.

Kontakion (or **kondak**) – A brief liturgical hymn that gives the meaning of a feast day; often paired with *troparion* (or tropar)

Trisagion
(literally "thrice-holy," from the Greek *tri*, three, and *agios*, holy) – The hymn or prayer "Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal, have mercy on us."

(From *Let Us Attend: A Journey through the Orthodox Divine Liturgy* by Father Lawrence Farley)

Українська Католицька Парафія Матері Божої Неустаючої Помочі

Церква Святого Пророка й Предтечи Йоана Хрестителя
Святиня Святого Миколая, Ахиепископа Мір Лікійського, Чудотворця

Ukrainian Catholic Parish of Our Lady of Perpetual Help

Church of the Holy Prophet, Forerunner and Baptizer John
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The Greatness of John the Forerunner

The Lord's forerunner was a man, not a god; whereas the Lord whom he preceded was both man and God. The forerunner was a man destined to be divinized by God's grace, whereas the One he preceded was God by nature, Who, through His desire to save and redeem us, lowered Himself in order to assume our human nature.

A man was sent. By whom? By the Divine Word, whose forerunner he was. To go before the Lord was his mission. Lifting up his voice, this man called out: "The voice of one crying in the wilderness!"

It was the herald preparing the way for the Lord's coming. John was his name; John to whom was given the grace to go ahead of the King of kings, to point out to the world the Word made flesh, to baptize Him with that baptism in which the Spirit would manifest His divine Sonship, to give witness through his teaching and martyrdom to the Eternal Light.

John Scotus Erigena (†877)