



CHRIST THE SAVIOR ORTHODOX CHURCH

1400 Coastal Highway; Fenwick Island, DE
302-537-6055 (church) / 302-988-1138 (rectory)
orthodoxdelmarva.org / frjohn@orthodoxdelmarva.org

BULLETIN OF NOVEMBER 18, 2007

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 18TH 25TH SUNDAY OF PENTECOST

8:40a.m. Hours
9:00a.m. Divine Liturgy
Coffee Hour

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 20TH 7:00p.m. Vespers

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 21ST ENTRANCE OF THE THEOTOKOS *One of the Twelve Great Feasts* 9:00a.m. Akathist

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 24TH 6:00p.m. Vespers

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 25TH 26TH SUNDAY OF PENTECOST 8:40a.m. Hours 9:00a.m. Divine Liturgy Coffee Hour

Fasting appears gloomy until one steps into its arena. But begin and you will see what light it brings after darkness, what freedom from bonds, what release after a burdensome life...

St. Theophan the Recluse

READER SCHEDULE

Sunday, Nov. 25th

Hours: Kathy Parrish
Epistle: Kathy Parrish

Sunday, Dec. 2nd

Hours: Mat. Emily
Epistle: Mat. Emily



The Nativity Fast

began on Thursday, November 15th, and ends with the celebration of the Divine Liturgy on Christmas Day, December 25th. During this period, in addition to abstaining from certain types of foods, we should also seek to free ourselves from sin by making a good Confession and, if we are not frequent communicants, by receiving Holy Communion.



The Entrance of the Theotokos

into the Temple is celebrated each year on November 21st. On this day we remember how the Virgin Mary was given as a young child by her parents Ss. Joakim and Anna to the Temple in dedication to the Lord's service. Upon entering the temple the Virgin Mary gave herself over to prayer, fasting, the study of the Scriptures, and the fulfillment of charitable deeds. Living such a life of holiness, she unwittingly prepared herself to receive the overshadowing of the Holy Spirit by Whom she would conceive and bear the Son of God in the flesh. We celebrate this feast during the Nativity Fast as a reminder that if we dedicate ourselves to God's service through spiritual work, we too can receive God Himself – not in our womb, but in our hearts. May the Lord help us prepare to celebrate His coming!

A Big "Thank You"

to those who have offered so selflessly of their time, financial resources, building materials, and expertise for the preparation of our new church home! There is still much work to be done, but we are making a good start as each of us offers what he or she can. Be assured that the Lord sees all of your efforts and sacrifice, and He will reward each according to his or her labors!



Have A Question

about Orthodox Christianity or parish life? Please feel free to give Fr. John an email or a call on the rectory line, 302-988-1138, or cell phone, 908-872-6589.

Pledge Sheets for 2008

are available for pickup in the back of the church. If you make offerings to help support our Mission, please consider filling out a pledge form. Your pledge: 1) will be kept confidential, 2) will help us budget better for next year, and 3) will help our Mission grow. Should you have any questions about pledging, please speak with Fr. John or Susan Pappas, our treasurer.

Orthodox 101 – Updated Schedule

Orthodoxy 101 will meet next on Monday, November 26th.

GOSSIP: SOWING THE BAD SEED

By Fr. Richard Demetrius Andres – Sermon delivered October 14, 2007

R.G. LeTourneau, the owner of a large earth-moving equipment company tells the story. "We used to have a scraper known as the model 'G'. Somebody asked one of our salesmen one day what the 'G' stood for. The salesman, after thinking a few seconds, replied, "Well, I guess the 'G' stands for 'Gossip', because like gossip, this machine moves a lot of dirt and moves it fast."

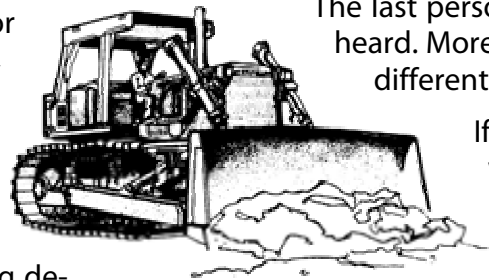
In today's gospel reading, the 4th Sunday of Luke 8:5-15, Jesus explains the Parable of the Sower. He says that the seed is the Word of God. By inference we know that God is the sower. We confess in the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed that God is the creator of all things. Fashioned in God's own image and likeness, we humans also have the ability to create. Thus, we are co-creators with God. We are also co-sowers with God. We too can spread the seed, the Word of God. By witnessing to what is right, good, holy and true, we help to plant Jesus Christ, in the hearts and minds of those around us.

However, we can also plant other types of seeds. If we are doing or saying things that are not right, good, holy and true, then we are planting bad seeds. In fact, one could say we are spreading herbicide that kills the true seed. In doing this, we are no longer being creative. Rather, we are being destructive. Good seeds are words/actions of love, encouragement, praise, kindness, compassion, forgiveness, peace, joy. Bad seeds/herbicide are words/actions of criticism, gossip, slander, envy, malice, hatred, jealousy. Good seeds produce more of the same good things and help people to work together to create more good. Bad seeds produce more bad things that sow dissension, division, doubt. Destruction is their end.

What is an example of a bad seed? Returning to our earth-moving scraper example, gossip and slander can be very destructive. Referring to gossip as 'dirt' reveals its true nature. Gossip is messy news that does not reflect well on its subject. If it's really bad, it's referred to as 'mud' and gossip or slander is called 'mud-slinging'. Gossip moves fast because of two reasons. One, we have the habit of sharing juicy tidbits about someone with other people as soon as we hear it. It's like a hot potato that must be passed along as quickly as possible. Even if it's only shared with two people, we have just doubled the gossip. If they do the same, it's an

exponential increase. The second reason, gossip moves fast is because we want to hear what's wrong with other people. We actually ask for it. "So what's the dirt on George? Have you heard anything about Georgia? No, I haven't heard but tell me what you've heard that's going on at St. George."

As gossip moves fast, the destruction spreads. The spoken word is a powerful force. When we hear unflattering news about someone, it sticks in our mind. Once there, it colors and distorts our perception of that person. We tend to see them, their words and actions, as motivated by these negative characterizations. The saddest part is that what we have heard about them is often untrue. Many of us are familiar with the gossip game or experiment to show it's nature of distortion. A group of people are put in a line, the first person whispers something gossipy in the ear of the person next to them. That person passes it along in the same way to the next and so on down the line until the end. The last person then says out loud what they heard. More often than not, it's substantially different than what the first person said.



If gossip is so destructive, why do we allow it, why do we welcome it, and why do we share it? Looking back at Jesus' teaching today, He says that the good seed, the Word of God, takes root and grows in a noble and good heart. Bad seed or gossip will enter and take root when our heart is lacking in goodness and nobility. In other words, it's the condition of our heart that causes us to participate in the sad and real game of gossip. We may have resentment and bitterness specifically towards the person we gossip about. These same negative feelings may cause us to speak out and hurt others with whom we have no specific issue. A sense of inadequacy or alienation can motivate us to get in the middle of gossip and become an important person, an insider who has news to share.

What's the antidote to gossip? In bible study last week we discussed the Parable of the Sower. We learned that we must guard the garden/field of our heart by getting off the busy wayside. Gossip travels when people are too busy to pay attention to the effect of their words and how it tramples people under their feet. We learned that we must actively pull out the weeds and thorns of earthly pleasures. When gossip arrives at our hear, we

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THE ENTRANCE OF THE THEOTOKOS INTO THE TEMPLE – CELEBRATED NOVEMBER 21ST

From the Prologue of Ochrid by St. Nikolai Velimirovich

When the most holy Virgin Mary had reached the age of three, her parents, holy Joachim and Anna, took her from Nazareth to Jerusalem, to give her to the service of God in fulfillment of their promise. It was three days journey to Jerusalem, but, going as they were on God's work, they did not find the journey difficult. Many of Joachim and Anna's kinsmen gathered to take part in this celebration, in which the invisible angels of God also took part. Maidens went ahead with lighted candles in their hands, followed by the most holy Virgin, led on either side by her father and mother. The Virgin was clad in royal and beautiful garments, like those of the 'king's daughter', the Bride of God (Ps. 44:9,10). Behind them walked many of their kinsfolk and friends, all bearing lighted candles. There were fifteen steps leading to the Temple. Her parents stood the Virgin on the first step, and she ran quickly to the top on her own, where the High Priest, Zacharias, the father of St John the Forerunner, met her and, taking her by the hand, led her not only into the Temple but into the Holy of Holies, the holiest place of all, into which none could enter except the High Priest, and that once a year. St Theophylact of Ochrid says that Zacharias was 'out of himself, and moved by God' when he led the Virgin into the chief place in the Temple, beyond the second curtain - otherwise there could be no explanation of his action. Her parents then offered sacrifices to God, according to the Law, received the priest's blessing and returned home, leaving the most holy Virgin in the Temple. She dwelt in the Temple for nine whole years. While her parents were alive, they visited her often. When they departed this life, the holy Virgin was left an orphan, and longed to remain in the Temple for the rest of her days, without entering into marriage. This being contrary both to the Law and Israelite custom, she was confided at the age of twelve to St Joseph, a kinsman of hers in Nazareth, so that she might, under the protection of betrothal, live in virginity and thus fulfill both her desire and the demands of the Law, for it was unknown in Israel at that time for a girl to vow perpetual virginity. The holy Virgin Mary was the first to do this, and was later followed by thousands of virgin men and women in the Church of Christ.



A MEAL OF UNITY

CHRISTIAN REFLECTIONS ON THANKSGIVING DINNER



Families like to meet together for a meal. When the family is large and particularly close to one another, it usually develops this family meal into a kind of ritual. Most Americans find this most clearly expressed in the traditional Thanksgiving Dinner, held every year. The time and place are important for Thanksgiving Dinner, so too is the menu which must be built around certain meats—usually a big turkey—and certain other traditional dishes, such as cranberry sauce and pumpkin pie. Other ritualistic elements are usually developed when a family meets over a number of years for this traditional meal: certain persons have certain functions, definite places to sit, preparation rites are evolved into a strict custom, certain routines become traditional after the meal is finished. And when the afternoon is finished, everyone goes away back to his own daily round of living strengthened once more in the sense of oneness with this family. This conviction of unity and mutual support will bolster each person often in times of frustration or loneliness which come into all our lives. No family should be

without a traditional meal. All of us, even those who cannot have such a gathering at Thanksgiving, know that this is true. Some families find that many more than one family meal each year is needed. And these families usually enjoy a unity and strength among themselves that is envied by others.

The Christian Family—the Family of God—also need their Meal of Unity. This need was well understood by Jesus Christ, and He instituted the Christian meal for all His followers. He did it very simply: He took bread and said, "This is my body." Then He broke it and gave it to His followers to eat. He took wine and said, "This is my blood." Then He gave it to them to drink. Then He said, "Do this in memory of me." As the Apostles ate, they realized that they were becoming one with each other by Christ Himself entering into all of them. It is on this strength that they lived and gave witness to Christ all over the world. This meal and its effects on the Christians who ate of it immediately fulfilled the prayer which Christ said to His Father on that same

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A Meal of Unity *continued from pg 3...*

night: "That they may be one Father, in you and you in me. . . that they may be one in us." From that day until now, Christians have always met together in the traditional Breaking of Bread.

Christians, too, over the years have evolved a thorough ritual as the setting for this traditional Meal of Unity. Orthodox Christians in particular have developed a preparation rite, the Eucharistic Prayer, the Epiclesis, which invokes the Holy Spirit to "descend upon us and these gifts here offered" and to change the bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ so that the Orthodox Faithful may break this Bread of Life and receive it unto themselves for the "remission of sins and Life Everlasting."

Christians who come together for this Eucharistic Meal should come carrying the gifts which they want to contribute. In early Christian days each one did literally carry gifts to the Altar, much like Aunt Jane brings a casserole or Uncle George brings a bottle of wine to Thanksgiving Dinner. Nowadays the preparation of gifts is done in our Churches through one representative of the whole assembly, the Priest. who brings the bread and wine to the Altar in the Great Entrance. Each of us, though, should give our lives and our sincere dedication to Christ's way of life while our representative is preparing the Gifts. The meal which we are readying on our Altars is, after all, OUR meal. OUR Breaking of the Bread. Of course, the Priest has the main function during the meal, because he is specially Ordained with the Grace of God to represent the community to God, as well as representing Christ before the community. But our function is also evidently meaningful; we come forward and eat from the Breaking of the Bread. We, like the Apostles, realize that all the assembly eating from this Holy Banquet are partaking of the same Christ which is filling us. We move back to our places



with a sense of deep unity growing within us and all around us. There is a togetherness in this which penetrates us. There is a strength in this which fills us with a sense of power. There is a solemn conviction in this which makes us feel more and more Divine. We join together with all Orthodox Christians in this Breaking of the Bread. . . but we join with Jesus Christ in the deepest sense of our being. All of us are one, not only together, but in Christ.

When a family leaves a Thanksgiving Dinner, they are strong against frustration and loneliness. When Orthodox Christians leave their Eucharistic Meal of Unity, the Breaking of the Bread, they have a deep conviction that they are all joined together in a renewed commitment to witnessing Christ in their own world. At the end of the Gathering, the Priest says, "Let us depart in peace, let us pray to the Lord." Surely this is clear truth. We indeed depart with Christ in us. We go in peace, the peace which Christ alone can give. We go to take Christ into whatever work is ours. Christ goes with us—with each of us, with all of us—and we know that large numbers of Orthodox Christians eat of the same Bread, and live on the strength of the same Jesus Christ. The more we eat His Flesh and drink His Blood, the more life, His Life, we have in us. And that life vivifies our actions till they become obviously and powerfully Christian. We witness Christ to others—individually and all together. Never will we be alone again. Together with countless other Orthodox Christians we are doing Christ's work. Christ working through us will remove all frustration. He will make our lives successful. If today's Orthodox Christians gather frequently for the Breaking of the Bread of Life, then people will say what the Romans said of the early Christians—and a touch of envy will be in their words: "See how they love one another.

Gossip: Sowing Bad Seed *continued from pg 2...*

have a choice to spread it or kill it, to think about it or forget it. We learned that a good and noble heart is one that is regularly tilled and turned over with self-examination, repentance and confession. Without this, our heart turns hard and callous and becomes more vulnerable to the temptation of idle talk.

In conclusion, the Sacrament of Holy Confession is the supreme antidote to gossip and slander. Why? In confession, we do not talk about others, but we talk about ourselves and our own dirt. Through our words, the guidance of the priest and the forgiveness of God, all the anger, bitterness, hurt, and inadequacy are washed away and we become clean again. Through this catharsis or cleansing, all our bad, gossipy news leaves us and dead-ends, never to be heard or talked about again, in the confidentiality of our spiritual father on earth and God the Father in heaven.

By Rev. Mark Beshara, St. Michael's Church, Van Nuys, CA