

CHRIST THE SAVIOR ORTHODOX CHURCH

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BULLETIN OF SEPTEMBER 10, 2006

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 10TH
13TH SUNDAY OF PENTECOST
8:40a.m. Hours
9:00a.m. Divine Liturgy
Coffee Hour

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 11TH
SAINT SILOUAN THE ATTHONITE
9:00p.m. Akathist

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 13TH
7:00p.m. Vespers with Litya

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 14TH - strict fast
ELEVATION OF THE PRECIOUS CROSS
One of the Twelve Great Feasts
8:40a.m. Hours
9:00a.m. Divine Liturgy

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 16TH
6:00p.m. Vespers

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 17TH
MARTYRS SOPHIA, FAITH, HOPE, AND LOVE
8:40a.m. Hours
9:00a.m. Divine Liturgy
Coffee Hour

Congratulations and Many Years

to Protopresbyter Daniel Hubiak, who celebrates the anniversary of his ordination to the Holy Priesthood on September 14th, the Elevation of the Precious Cross. May God bless and preserve him!

Second Annual Diocesan Assembly

is to be held with His Beatitude Metropolitan Herman on Wednesday, November 1, 2006, at St. Vladimir Church in Trenton, New Jersey. A lay delegate is needed to accompany the priest. If you are interested, please see Fr. John.

Parish Council Meeting

Sunday, October 1st, following the Divine Liturgy.



The Postfeast of the Exultation of the Precious Cross

is celebrated from September 14th through September 21st, the "leave-taking" of the feast. Throughout this time the troparion and kontakion for the feast are sung or said with our morning and evening prayers, and at meal times; the troparion before the meal and the kontakion after.



Troparion (Tone 1)

O Lord, save Thy people, And bless Thine inheritance. Grant victories to the Orthodox Christians Over their adversaries. And by virtue of Thy Cross, Preserve Thy habitation.

Kontakion (Tone 4)

As Thou wast voluntarily crucified for our sake, Grant mercy to those who are called by Thy Name; Make all Orthodox Christians glad by Thy power, Granting them victory over their adversaries, By bestowing on them the invincible trophy, Thy weapon of peace.

Instead of Holy God

Before Thy Cross, we bow down in veneration, O Master, and Thy holy Resurrection, we glorify!

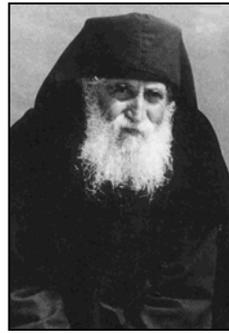


THE PRECIOUS AND LIFE-GIVING CROSS

On September 14th, the Church commemorates two events in connection with the Honorable Cross of Christ: first, the finding of the Honorable Cross on Golgotha and second, the return of the Honorable Cross from Persia to Jerusalem.

Visiting the Holy Land, the holy Empress Helena decided to find the Honorable Cross of Christ. An old Jewish man named Judah was the only one who knew where the Cross was located, and, constrained by the empress, he revealed that the Cross was buried under the temple of Venus that Emperor Hadrian had built on Golgotha. The empress ordered that this idolatrous temple be razed and, having dug deep below it, found three crosses. While the empress pondered on how to recognize which of these was the Cross of Christ, a funeral procession passed by. Patriarch Macarius told them to place the crosses, one by one, on the dead man. When they placed the first and second cross on the dead man, the dead man lay unchanged. When they placed the third cross on him, the dead man came back to life. By this they knew that this was the Precious and Life-giving Cross of Christ. They then placed the Cross on a sick woman, and she became well. The patriarch elevated the Cross for all the people to see, and the people sang with tears: "Lord, have mercy!" Empress Helena had a silver case made and set the Honorable Cross in it.

Later, the Persian Emperor Chozroes conquered Jerusalem, enslaved many people, and took the Lord's Cross to Persia. The Cross remained in Persia for fourteen years. In the year 628 the Greek Emperor Heraclius defeated Chozroes and, with much ceremony, returned the Cross to Jerusalem. As he entered the city Emperor Heraclius carried the Cross on his back, but suddenly was unable to take another step. Patriarch Zacharias saw an angel preventing the emperor from bearing the Cross on the same path that the Lord had walked barefoot and humiliated. The patriarch communicated this vision to the emperor. The emperor removed his raiment and, in ragged attire and barefoot, took up the Cross, carried it to Golgotha, and placed it in the Church of the Resurrection, to the joy and consolation of the whole Christian world.



FROM THE COUNSELS OF ELDER PAISIOS

If you want to grab God's attention so He'll hear you during prayer, turn the dial to humility, for God always works in this frequency; then humbly ask for His mercy.

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If we haven't got control of our mind during the hour of spiritual study we are not benefited at all. We simply yawn and tire ourselves without a goal, for we cannot remember anything. In the same way, when the printer doesn't have his mind on his work and forgets to put ink in, the printing presses work without printing anything.

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There are no people more blessed than those who have made contact with the "heavenly television station" and who are piously connected to God. In the same way, no people are more wretched than those who have cut contact with God and wander, dizzy, around the world, flipping through the world's many television stations so as to forget, if only for a short time, the anguish of the derailment of their lives.

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In the hour of prayer, when our mind wanders to thoughts of bad things, of if these thoughts come without our wanting them, we shouldn't wage an offensive war against the enemy; because, even if all the lawyers in the world joined together, they wouldn't make any headway with a little demon. Only through ignoring these thoughts can one chase them away. The same holds true for blasphemous thoughts.

From the Prologue of Ochrid by Saint Nikolai of Zicha

TITHES AND FIRSTFRUITS

by Fr. Dimitri Cozby

"Honor the Lord with your substance, and with the firstfruits of all your produce." (Proverbs 3:9)

In ancient Israel, the Church of the Old Testament, the Law of Moses instituted the "tithe," also called the offering of the "first-fruits." "Tithe" is merely the Old English word for "tenth." Israel's tithe was an assessment of one-tenth of all produce. Usually this portion was rendered from the first harvested of the crop, hence the tithe of "firstfruits." The proceeds were devoted to the maintenance of the Temple, and support of the priesthood, and the sustenance of the poor (Num. 18:24, Deut. 12:11, and 26:12).

These activities are still necessary parts of Church life. Parishes need suitable places for worship, education, and fellowship; we are still responsible for our priest's livelihood; and the Lord continually reminds us of our obligation to the needy. Therefore, the practice of good stewardship, represented by the tithe, retains its importance.

The motive behind the Old Testament tithe, however, was not purely pragmatic. For the ancient Hebrews tithing was never merely an efficient way to raise money. Rather, they understood that their relationship with God required them to dedicate a substantial portion of the fruit of their labor to His purposes.

Our basic understanding as Orthodox Christians, derived from the Old Testament, is that everything comes from God. All that we have or hope to possess, beginning with life itself, is His gift. We acknowledge this fact in our spiritual life through prayer and fasting and through our struggle to follow His commandments.



With regard to our material blessings, we confess that He is their true source by returning a portion to Him, to be used for His purposes in this world. These works include the maintenance of worship, the support of those called to His special service, and aid for the poor. By thus giving a portion of our wealth for His purposes, we sanctify the remainder. Through offering a part, we bring the whole of our lives into harmony with God's will.

The Old Testament Law embodied this admission of God's sovereignty in the tithe. Nothing in this is changed by the coming of Christ. Tithing is not a purely Old Testament observance revived by Protestants and, therefore, a thing we Orthodox Christians need not worry about. It is true that many Old Testament practices are now understood in a spiritual way fulfilled, transformed, or displaced by Christ's coming, death, and Resurrection. It is also true that, in recent times, some Protestants have stressed tithing as the norm of giving. But in reality, neither of these objections applies to the tithe or denies its "validity."

Our Lord criticized the way in which His opponents tithed, but in so doing, He confirmed the tithe itself: "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe your mint, dill and cumin, but have omitted



Teach Me to Pray

Saint Philaret of Moscow

My Lord, I know not what I ought to ask of Thee. Thou and Thou alone knowest my needs. Thou lovest me more than I am able to love Thee. O Father, grant unto me, Thy servant, all which I cannot ask. For a cross I dare not ask, nor for consolation; I dare only to stand in Thy presence. My heart is open to Thee. Thou seest my needs of which I myself am unaware. Behold and lift me up! In Thy presence I stand, awed and silenced by Thy will and Thy judgments, into which my mind cannot penetrate. To Thee I offer myself as a sacrifice. No other desire is mine but to fulfill Thy will. Teach me how to pray. Do Thyself pray within me. Amen.



the weightier matters of the law judgment, mercy and faith. These you ought to have done, without omitting the others." (Matthew 23:23)

Likewise, one of the earliest witnesses to Holy Tradition, The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles (sometimes called The Didache), applies the firstfruits to the Church. "Every firstfruit of the produce of the wine-vat and of the threshing-floor, of cattle and flocks, you will take and give as the firstfruit to your prophets; for they are your chief priests... If you prepare food, take and give the firstfruit according to the commandment. Likewise, when you open a jar of wine or oil, take and give the firstfruit to the prophets. Take also the firstfruit of money and clothing and every possession, as it may seem right to you, and give according to the commandment."

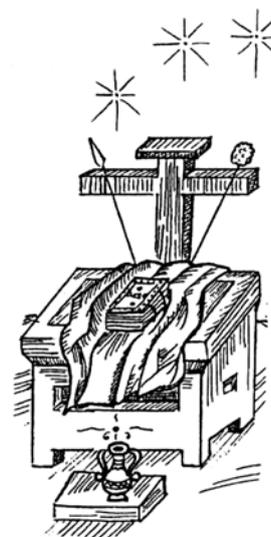
Saint Irenaeus, writing toward the end of the second century, notes that Christ Himself "gave directions to His disciples to offer the firstfruits of His own created things not as if He stood in need of them, but that they might be themselves neither unfruitful nor ungrateful."

Saint John Chrysostom contends that the tithe is more binding on us than on the Jews. In one of his sermons, he notes that under the Old Testament tithing was the norm. Among Christians, however, it has become a cause for amazement; we exclaim in wonder, "Why so-and-so tithes!" Saint John finds this a sad reflection on our piety and ends with the warning, "If it was a danger to neglect the tithe then, imagine how serious it must be now!"

As we said, the Old Testament saints did not see the tithe merely as a way for organizing fundraising for the Temple and clergy, but as part of their relationship with God. Similarly, we cannot regard our giving merely as providing for our parish's material needs. We must appreciate the spiritual importance of tithing, as the return to the Lord of a portion of His blessings through which we sanctify the remainder for our own use. Thus we acknowledge the Lord's claim upon the whole of our life and affirm that the focus of our existence is not this world but the Kingdom to come.

The tithe, one-tenth, is the ideal of stewardship set forth in Scripture in the Old Testament tithe, and in Tradition, represented by The Didache, Saint Irenaeus, and Saint John Chrysostom. At first, for those not used to the idea of tithing, this amount may seem staggering. The best way to begin is to adopt a lower percentage and then increase it over time. First, we should accept the underlying principle behind tithing: That we should not give an arbitrary amount, but that our contribution should represent a proportion, a percentage, of our income. Once we establish a certain percentage (for example 3-5%) as our starting point, we can then increase it by one percent a year until we reach the tithe.

From the beginning, however, we must adopt the idea that we give a percentage of our treasure; we cannot base it on impulse, giving "a little something" from what we "have left over." Instead, our offering should represent "the firstfruits of our produce" offered because we feel the need to "honor the Lord with our substance," because we want to show our gratitude to Him for His blessings, and because we acknowledge our part in His work of redeeming the world.



THE TIME TO TITHE IS NOW: IT IS A SPIRITUAL ADVENTURE

You will never be in a better position to tithe than you are today. Whether you can tithe has relatively little to do with the amount of your income or the number of your financial obligations. The person who says, "After I pay all my bills, I can't afford to tithe," is telling the truth. He or she simply has the cart before the horse. None of us could afford to tithe with what's left. Tithing (10% giving) is a matter of putting first things first, taking our tithe out first, and then wisely managing the rest of our income in a way in which we still pay our bills.

