

Weekly Schedule of Services

Saturday: 4pm Great Vespers

This ancient prayer service assists in preparing us for the most sacred of services, the Sunday Liturgy.

Upcoming: Stay after as we preach through St. Paul's Letter to the Romans.

Sunday: 9:30am Divine Liturgy

This is the central day of the Christian week, where we worship our great God in holy array, and receive the most sacred Body and Blood of our Lord God and Savior Jesus Christ.

Wednesday: 6:30pm Prayer and Essentials

After praying an Akathist, join us as we explore and discuss the Core Teachings of Christian Faith and Practice through the Scriptures and the Church Fathers.

Monday through Friday: 8am Morning Prayer

Come join us in prayer for our Church family and community as she begins her day.

Announcements

Regular Wednesday evening Choir Rehearsal is at 7pm

Please let Fr. Joshua know about any upcoming birthdays or anniversaries, or about those who are sick or travelling and may need prayer.

Please be in touch with Fr. Joshua for your *regular* practice of Confession.

Out of respect for the unique wishes of each parishioner, please personally request for pastoral visitation. If unable to make a personal request, the parishioner's directly authorized loved one is encouraged to request for pastoral visitation on their behalf.

Find Peace of Soul at

All Saints Orthodox Church

211 Willow Avenue, Olyphant, PA 18447

www.allsaintsolyphant.org

Fr. Joshua Schooping - Parish Priest - 570-489-0942



Sunday, December 22, 2019

Great Martyr Anastasia and her Companions

Epistle: Hebrews 11:9-10, 17-23, 32-40

Gospel: Matthew 1:1-25

Biblical, Sacramental, Patristic, Christ-centered, and Spirit-filled, *All Saints Orthodox Church* is a community of Orthodox Christians seeking to know and live the Gospel by putting on the Mind of Christ and acquiring the Holy Spirit. Discover who you are in Christ with practical teachings to uplift and transform your mind, open and expand your heart, and experience the freeing, awesome, and intimate presence of God in your soul.

Pastoral Reflection

Christ's Nativity initiates the most marvelous event of human history: the Incarnation of the Word of God. Within the life of Christ, His Cross and Resurrection stand at the saving center of the very meaning of all things, and it is at the Nativity where Christ initiates this saving of mankind. From the Beginning to the End, the Person of Christ is the purpose of Creation and its Consummation. As St. Paul teaches: "All things were created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist." Certainly to God belongs all the glory! The Nativity therefore deserves our most solemn meditation. The Infinite One, who existed from eternity, the Word of God, the Son of God the Father, true God of true God, Light of Light, lowered Himself and stooped down to become a mortal man. Taking mortal human nature upon Himself, the Personal Infinite set aside the prerogatives of divine nature in order to become a finite man subject to suffering and death. Why would He do this? In a word, Love. In Love, He became a man so that He could reveal God's glory in the saving of sinful man, tasting death for every man so that in Him man can be given, freely given, life eternal, to the glory of God the Father. The Nativity is therefore the beginning of this, our salvation. It is especially fitting, then, to recall His divine nature, especially at this time, that there never was a time when the Son of God did not exist, never a time when He did not uphold all things by the word of His power. Eternally born of the Father, Christ has two Nativities: one from the Father from eternity, and one in time as the Son of the Ever-Virgin Mary. He came to die in our place, to go into death, and to defeat death so we might be ever free of its dominion.

Keep Praying

"Faith requires a mode of thinking that is single, limpidly pure and simple, far removed from any deviousness or invention of methods."

-St. Isaac the Syrian

Wisdom, Let us Attend

The Church Fathers are a repository of living wisdom. One such Church Father is St. John Chrysostom (4th-5th Century):

Even if we have thousands of acts of great virtue to our credit, our confidence in being heard must be based on God's mercy and His love for men. Even if we stand at the very summit of virtue, it is by mercy that we shall be saved.

We often equate Christianity with good works, with acts of virtue. Faithful Christians certainly perform many good works. These works emerge not only out of love and gratitude for all of God's gifts, and not only because they are intrinsically right, but also out of obedience. We are commanded to virtue. And yet, not a single one of those virtuous acts puts us above the need for mercy. Even performing countless good deeds, standing *at the very summit of virtue* we will still only have done that which is required. As Christ teaches, "when you have done all those things which you are commanded, say, 'We are unprofitable servants. We have done what was our duty to do.'" Christians are commanded to love, to be just and merciful. Our good deeds are simply what is asked of us. And yet we have all fallen short of the glory of God because we have all acted faithlessly at one time or another, we have all struggled with sin. And if any do not struggle against sin, then they have deceived themselves and forgotten that they were created to manifest God's light in the world. What fellowship has light with darkness? God's standard is His own light, His own holiness, not ours. God measures according to His standard, not man's. And so as we accumulate good deeds, and contemplate our deaths, we ought also to realize that not a single one of those good deeds frees us from the absolute dependence on God's mercy. God does not and will not save any on the basis of good deeds. Due to the sickness of sin that we inherit from Adam, we are all corrupt to some degree, and so no amount of good deeds can make our corruption disappear. Only God's mercy can do this. Only God's mercy will treat with man in a saving way, for in Christ God was reconciled to man through His death. And we have been justified by His resurrection. Therefore, in all your well-doing, trust first and last in God's mercy.