

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 29, 2019

14,000 Holy Innocents

Epistle: Galatians 1:11-19

Gospel: Matthew 2:13-23

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

The birth of God the Son into the world is the beginning of the defeat of sin, death, and the devil. God did this on behalf of man and for His glory. It is a profound Mystery not only that He did it, but that He did this *in this way*. Why would God become man in order to defeat sin, death, and the devil? Why not just pardon everyone arbitrarily, zap the devil with supernatural lightning, and drop eternal life pills into everyone's hands? If God is all-powerful, could He not just snap His fingers and cause all to be made well? Some have made such comments, but almost always they try to reduce God to what is understandable to finite minds. Many people think that if they cannot understand something, then it is *de facto* invalid. In other words, this person elevates their personal intelligence above the infinite God. They think of God as simply a little bit bigger than a human person, maybe a bit challenging to understand, but certainly not inaccessible, and that His ways should be directly understandable to human reasoning. In fact, this person thinks that if they were God, then they would do it some other way, and that what makes sense to them is what God ought to do. Of course, this way of thinking about God is empty of truth, full of pride, and a gross exaggeration of the abilities of human intelligence. God's intelligence is unfathomable. It is infinite, and contains all knowledge, and all possible knowledge. Every atom and every quark in the universe is *exhaustively* known by God. God's intelligence is completely unfettered by time or space. God knows the end from the beginning. The vastness of His intelligence is beyond all imagination. Too many people fail to appreciate His infinite intelligence, and so when He saves us in the way of His choosing, people trivialize the act and fail to wonder at its glory.

Keep Praying

"Remember that you share the earthly nature of Adam and that you are clothed with his infirmity."

-St. Isaac the Syrian

Wisdom, Let us Attend

The Church Fathers are a repository of living wisdom. One such Church Father is St. Isaac the Syrian (7th Century):

Show the fullness of your mercy by the good with which you repay those who have done you injustice.

Injustice is a constant feature of human life. Naturally and rightfully we strive to be just, and to create environments that maximize justice and minimize injustice. It would seem, but it would be untrue, that because we can minimize injustice we also ought to be able to remove injustice entirely. Many people are actually travelling this path, the path of constant seeking out all injustice, constant vigilance against all injustice, constant striving to remove all injustice. This way of living and thinking, however, is spiritually imbalanced and filled with constant fear and anger. One ever fears coming injustice, is ever angry about constant injustice, and ever resents past injustice. One never knows peace, for injustice is never fully absent. But God calls us to peace. And so, how can we have peace if there is so much injustice? It is here that God's other answer to injustice is met with: Mercy. God calls us to peace in mercy. In Christ, God meets us in mercy. Despite all of our willfulness, cold-heartedness, hard-heartedness, lack of love, vanity, pride, unbelief, selfishness, greed, and all our sin, rather than surrendering us to eternal death, God instead chose to extend Himself in mercy. In short, He healed our evil with His good. He healed our injustice with His mercy. He bore in Himself the justice we deserved, and that would have destroyed us, and instead extended to us pardon. This is fundamentally distinct from the merciless scales of justice. Our hearts are so often bound up with injustice, with the undeserved treatment we received as children and as adults, at home, at school, at work, in friendships, in family. We are so often calculating the weight of the wrong done to us, and we strain under the burden of injustice. We fend off peace in favor of remembering a wrong done to us, or done to our loved one. But mercy and peace do not meet in such a heart, and so instead of bringing healing to our lives, we choke our souls with the grief of wrongs done. But as God forgave us in Christ, let us also forgive others in Christ. Let us meet peace in mercy.