

Glory to God for all things!

We are filled with joy to be back at Church, and are so encouraged by those who have returned to worship. Let us keep up prayer for those who have yet to come back, and invite anyone who may be looking for a Church home to come and explore the Orthodox Church with us.

The riches of God's grace know no boundary.

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.

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.

Monday through Friday: 8am Morning Prayer

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

Announcements

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.

Please let Fr. Joshua know if you would like to have your home blessed.

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



June 28, 2020

Venerable Sergius and Herman of Valaam

Epistle: Romans 5:1-10

Gospel: Matthew 6:22-33

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

Pastoral Reflection

The difficulties of life are, essentially, the food by which the spirit of man grows into the likeness of Christ. How we relate to difficulties tells us the state of our soul. If we react to difficulties with fear, anger, judgment, impatience, and other such qualities, then we know that we are operating from a state of spiritual illness. In this way we show that we have made ourselves dependent on the world rather than God. When we are making ourselves dependent on the world, we are constantly changing our mood in reaction to the world's changes. In this state of the soul one is constantly at the mercy of circumstances and situations. Instead of remaining peaceful, we are ever disturbed. When we find a happy moment, we are angry as soon as the world takes it away. Dependence on the world is the greatest misery, for even happiness is ephemeral and even illusory. Alternatively, if in the face of life's inevitable suffering we remain patient, steadfast in faith, loving, gentle, and kind, then we can know that our soul is in a healthy state. In this state is enormous freedom, for one does not go up and down with the world, is not dragged into a false sense of security by some windfall, and is not dashed into despair in some crisis. This is why St. Paul teaches that we must keep our eyes on Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith, for as the world burns with the heat of the passions, the patient soul remains cool. Where others react and panic, the faith-filled soul remains collected and calm. Suffering thus produces innumerable opportunities to grow in Christ, and is therefore an invaluable aid in our spiritual growth in likeness to Christ. Suffering acts like fuel to faith, keeping the soul Godward.

Keep Praying

"Nothing needs so much effort as prayer to God. If anyone wants to pray, the demons try to interrupt the prayer, for they know that prayer is the only thing that hinders them. ... we need to pray till our dying breath. This is the great struggle."
-Abba Agatho

Wisdom, Let us Attend

The Church Fathers are a repository of living wisdom. One such Church Father is St. Nikitas Stithatos (11th Century). He taught:

"Know thyself": this is true humility, the humility that teaches us to be inwardly humble and makes our heart contrite.

Self knowledge is essential, and it is the key to humility. Humility itself is essential, and it is acquired through self knowledge. But what is the self? How often do we stop and ask ourselves the question: "Who am I?" It may strike as a silly question, but, in fact, Abba Poemen, the famed desert father, instructed one of his disciples to inquire "at every moment: 'Who am I?'" Clearly, the question has depths that require exploration and examination. So often we live under the assumption that we know ourselves. The reason for this is that we confuse our personality with who we are. Our personality, however, is that collection of experiences, memories, opinions, beliefs, likes and dislikes, etc., all rolled into one. None of those, however, are our self. Our self exists from the womb, prior to birth, and our self is prior to our name. It is prior to our habits, our memories, our attitudes, etc., and our self is the same throughout all the changes our personalities go through. Experiences come and go, but the self is the same self. The body changes, but the self remains the same self. Just as the eye cannot be confused with the objects it sees, likewise our self cannot be confused with bodily and mental states. St. Nikitas states: *What I am is not at all the same as that which characterizes me.* In other words, one's place of birth does not say who or what one is. Family trees do not say who or what one is. Who or what one is prior to all that. The self is not an object of knowledge, for it is *that* which knows. Man is created in the image of God, and since God transcends all knowledge, so "who am I" transcends all knowledge. This mystery must be sat with, examined, pursued, for *What I am is an image of God manifest in a spiritual, immortal and intelligent soul, having an intellect that is the father of my consciousness and that is consubstantial with the soul and inseparable from it.* If one can see and remain in oneself as that, then, as Abba Poemen teaches, you will "find rest in this life and the next."