



SAINT INNOCENT ORTHODOX CHURCH

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June 2015 Newsletter

Pentecost and Creation by Fr. Stephen Freeman

Earth is a wondrous place – no matter where we go – how deep, how far, how high, how hot, how inhospitable – in this place we find life. Everywhere we look on our nearest neighbor – Mars – we find – no life. We want to find life. We hope to find life. We theorize life. But we have yet to find it.

There is something about life, at least in our earthly experience, that is inexorable. Any individual case of life may be fragile, but life itself endures. In the Genesis account we are told that God blessed this planet and said:

Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb that yields seed, and the fruit tree that yields fruit according to its kind, whose seed is in itself, on the earth"; and it was so. And the earth brought forth grass, the herb that yields seed according to its kind, and the tree that yields fruit, whose seed is in itself according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. (Gen 1:11-12 NKJ)

Note that the account does not say that God said "Let there be life!" and life just appeared...(Boom! Trees!) But that He blessed this place and commanded that it bring forth grass... herbs... trees... according to their kind... and it was so!



The feast of Pentecost in Eastern tradition, celebrates the Descent of the Holy Spirit on the Church as Christians do across the world. However, there is a strange aspect to the Eastern version of the feast (or so it might seem). The Feast focuses as

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much on the Holy Spirit's work in Creation as it does on the Spirit's work in the Church. The Church is decorated in green. In Russian tradition, branches of birch are brought into the Church; fresh green grass is placed on the floor; flowers are everywhere. In Soviet times a secular version of the festival remained, called the Day of Trees.

The outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the Church is not something separate from Creation – nor are the trees a distraction from the Church. They are, together, a proper reminder of the role God's Spirit plays always, everywhere. He is the "Lord and Giver of Life."

Just as the Spirit moved over the face of the waters in the beginning of creation, so He moves over the face of all things at all times, bringing forth life and all good things. Though I am frequently assaulted with bouts of pessimism, despairing over various aspects of our distorted civilization, the truth is that like the planet itself, civilization with its drive for beauty and order seem inexorable. The history of humanity is not the story of a fall from a great civilization with increasing instances of barbarism and cave dwelling. Great civilizations have risen and fallen, but civilizations continue to occur. Some may already have begun in the ruins that surround us now. The story told in Scripture is not the story of collapse and decay. There are certainly dire warnings of terrible trials and great catastrophes. But these things do not reveal the mystery of God's will. These things are cracks in the pavement while life continues to burst forth:

God has made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself, that in the dispensation of the fullness of the times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth– in Him (Eph. 1:9-10).

What appeared as tongues of flame upon the heads of the disciples at Pentecost was a manifestation of this Divine Purpose at work. With the sound of a mighty rushing wind, the Holy Spirit filled the room. The fullness of the Church burst into the streets proclaiming the Gospel in a multitude of languages. Being birthed in Jerusalem was the New Jerusalem, where there is neither slave nor free, Jew nor Greek, male nor female. Instead there is the fullness that fills all things bringing forth all things in one – in the One Christ Himself.

The voice of Pentecost is the voice of creation's groans being transformed into the glorious liberty of the children of God. Stones cry out, trees clap their hands and the song of creation rejoices in the One Christ.



Announcements

- Fr. Theophan and family will be out of town the first two weeks of June. Fr. Dimitri Oselinsky will be filling in for the Saturday evening Vespers and the Sunday morning Divine Liturgies on the weekends of the 7th and 14th.
- The first week of June is fast free!
- The Apostles Fast begins on June 8th and continues until June 29th. Orthodox Christians are asked to abstain from meat and dairy.
- 10am, Wednesday, June 17th we are scheduled to help at the Ministerial association's food drop at Christ UMC in Forsyth. All are welcome to come and help distribute food to the less fortunate in our area.
- Fr. Theophan begin his second unity of Clinical Pastoral Education on Thursday June 18th. This series of classes will continue through October.
- The Parish Council is scheduled to meet on June 18th at 6pm.
- The Great Feast of the Apostles Peter and Paul will be served on Sunday June 28th.

Pledges, Tithes and Donations

The summer are often fanatically thin months for our church and churches in general. If you are leaving town please consider mailing your pledges, tithes or donations while you are away. You can also donate on our website.

Orthodox Evangelism 101

Starting on June 28th Fr. Theophan will be teaching a three part series of classes on Orthodox Evangelism. These classes will be roughly an hour long on Sunday's starting at 12:30pm.

Baby Bottle Boomerang

You may notice the baby bottles in the entrance of the church. They are as a fund raiser for the Monroe County Pregnancy Center in Forsyth. The pregnancy center offers emotional and material support for to teen mothers. They offer pregnancy testing, options counseling, post-abortion support, parenting classes, adoption assistance, pre-natal educational programs and a clothes closet. Free to take a bottle home and fill it with change or cash. You can also donate to the church and we will make sure your money gets to them. This fund raiser will end for us on June 14th.

Book Club

On Tuesday June 30, 2015 at 6:30pm we will meet at Colin and Molly Croft's house for the Book Club. The book we will be discussing is *Becoming a Healing Presence*, by Dr. Albert Rossi. Copies are available in our bookstore for \$16. Light refreshments will be provided by the host. All are welcome.

All American Council July 20-24th

This year the Orthodox Church in America is holding its All American Council in Atlanta. The council is scheduled for July 20-24th. The council relies heavily on volunteers. If you would like to volunteer please let Fr. Theophan know. Most volunteer positions will be simple tasks like helping people pick up their registrations.

Many Years!

Birthdays

3 Aaron Williams
5 Nicole Thomae
7 Heidi Hintermaier
7 Ion Munteanu
15 Nikki Williams
16 Olga Plummer
17 Jordan Thomae
20 Bianca Lee
24 Benita Muth
29 Elena Dorogy

Anniversaries

30 George and Larisa Moore



The Feast of the Holy Apostles Peter and Paul

The divinely-blessed Peter was from Bethsaida of Galilee. He was the son of Jonas and the brother of Andrew the First-called. He was a fisherman by trade, unlearned and poor, and was called Simon; later he was renamed Peter by the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, Who looked at him and said, "Thou art Simon the son of Jonas; thou shalt be called Cephas (which is by interpretation, Peter)" (John 1:42).

On being raised by the Lord to the dignity of an Apostle and becoming inseparable from Him as His zealous disciple, he followed Him from the beginning of His preaching of salvation up until the very Passion, when, in the court of Caiaphas the high priest, he denied Him thrice because of his fear of the Jews and of the danger at hand. But again, after many bitter tears, he received complete forgiveness of his transgression.

After the Resurrection of Christ and the descent of the Holy Spirit, he preached in Judea, Antioch, and certain parts of Asia, and finally came to Rome, where he was crucified upside down by Nero, and thus he ascended to the eternal habitations about the year 66 or 68, leaving two Catholic (General) Epistles to the Church of Christ.

Paul, the chosen vessel of Christ, the glory of the Church, the Apostle of the Nations and teacher of the whole world, was a Jew by race, of the tribe of

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Benjamin, having Tarsus as his homeland. He was a Roman citizen, fluent in the Greek language, an expert in knowledge of the Law, a Pharisee, born of a Pharisee, and a disciple of Gamaliel, a Pharisee and notable teacher of the Law in Jerusalem. For this cause, from the beginning, Paul was a most fervent zealot for the traditions of the Jews and a great persecutor of the Church of Christ; at that time, his name was Saul (Acts 22:3-4).

In his great passion of rage and fury against the disciples of the Lord, he went to Damascus bearing letters of introduction from the high priest. His intention was to bring the disciples of Christ back to Jerusalem in bonds. As he was approaching Damascus, about midday there suddenly shone upon him a light from Heaven. Falling on the earth, he heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me?" And he asked, "Who art Thou, Lord?" And the Lord said, "I am Jesus Whom thou persecutest; it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks." And that heavenly voice and brilliance made him tremble, and he was blinded for a time. He was led by the hand into the city, and on account of a divine revelation to the Apostle Ananias (see Oct. 1), he was baptized by him, and both his bodily and spiritual eyes were opened to the knowledge of the Sun of Righteousness.

And straightway- O wondrous transformation! - beyond all expectation, he spoke with boldness in the synagogues, proclaiming that "Christ is the Son of God" (Acts 9:1-21). As for his zeal in preaching the Gospel after these things had come to pass, as for his unabating labors and afflictions of diverse kinds, the wounds, the prisons, the bonds, the beatings, the stonings, the shipwrecks, the journeys, the perils on land, on sea, in cities, in wildernesses, the continual vigils, the daily fasting, the hunger, the thirst, the nakedness, and all those other things that he endured for the Name of Christ, and which he underwent before nations and kings and the Israelites, and above all, his care for all the churches, his fiery longing for the salvation of all, whereby he became all things to all men, that he might save them all if possible, and because of which, with his heart aflame, he continuously traveled throughout all parts, visiting them all, and like a bird of heaven flying from Asia and Europe, the West and East, neither staying nor abiding in any one place - all these things are related incident by

incident in the Book of the Acts, and as he himself tells them in his Epistles.

His Epistles, being fourteen in number, are explained in 250 homilies by Saint John Chrysostom and make manifest the loftiness of his thoughts, the abundance of the revelations made to him, the wisdom given to him from God, wherewith he brings together in a wondrous manner the Old with the New Testaments, and expounds the mysteries thereof which had been concealed under types; he confirms the doctrines of the Faith, expounds the ethical teaching of the Gospel, and demonstrates with exactness the duties incumbent upon every rank, age, and order of man. In all these things his teaching proved to be a spiritual trumpet, and his speech was seen to be more radiant than the sun, and by these means he clearly sounded forth the word of truth and illumined the ends of the world. Having completed the work of his ministry, he likewise ended his life in martyrdom when he was beheaded in Rome during the reign of Nero, at the same time, some say, when Peter was crucified.

ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN CELEBRATION OF THE FEAST OF THE APOSTLES PETER AND PAUL

The Feast and commemoration of the Apostles Peter and Paul is celebrated with the Divine Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom which is conducted on the morning of the feast. Vigil (Vespers & Matins) is conducted on the evening before the day of the Feast. Prior to this day, the Orthodox Church observes the Apostles' Fast, a period of fasting that begins on the Monday after the Sunday of All Saints. This Sunday is always one week after the Sunday of Pentecost, so the length of the Apostles' Fast varies from year to year depending on the date of Pascha.

The Feast of the Apostles Peter and Paul is followed on the June 30 by the Feast of the Synaxis of the Holy Twelve Apostles.

Scripture readings for the Feast of Peter and Paul are the following: At Vespers: 1 Peter 1:3-9; 1 Peter 1:13-19; 1 Peter 2:11-24 At the Matins: John 21:15-25. At the Divine Liturgy: 2 Corinthians 11:21-12:9, Matthew 16:13-19.

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Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	1 <i>Fr Theophan and family on vacation through June 15th</i>	2	3 No Fast Readers Vespers	4 1-4pm Central State Prison Ministry	5 No Fast	6 5pm Confession 6pm Great Vespers
7 All Saints 9:40 Hours 10am Divine Liturgy w/ Fr. Dimitry 11:45 Agape	8	9	10 Readers Vespers	11 Wine & Oil 1-4pm Central State Prison Ministry	12	13 Fish, Wine & Oil 5pm Confession 6pm Great Vespers
14 Fish, Wine & Oil 9:40 Hours 10am Divine Liturgy w/ Fr. Dimitry 11:45 Agape	15	16 Wine & Oil <i>Fr. Theophan and family return</i>	17 10am Food Drop at Forsyth UMC Daily Vespers	18 Wine & Oil 1-4pm Central State Prison Ministry 6pm Parish Council	19 Wine & Oil	20 Fish, Wine & Oil 5pm Confession 6pm Great Vespers
21 Fish, Wine & Oil 9:40 Hours 10am Divine Liturgy 11:45 Agape	22	23 Wine & Oil	24 Fish, Wine & Oil Daily Vespers	25 Wine & Oil 8am MCMA Meeting 1-4pm Central State Prison Ministry 8pm Webanar	26	27 Fish, Wine & Oil 5pm Confession 6pm Great Vespers
28 9:40 Hours 10am Festal Divine Liturgy 11:45 Agape 12:30 Evangelism 101	29 Feast of the Holy Apostles Peter and Paul (celebrated Sunday)	30 6:30pm Book Club				

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Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			1 6pm Daily Vespers	2 1-4pm Central State Prison Ministry	3	4 Independence Day 5pm Confession 6pm Great Vespers
5 9:40 Hours 10am Divine Liturgy 11:45 Agape 12:30 Evangelism 101	6	7	8 6pm Daily Vespers	9 1-4pm Central State Prison Ministry	10	11 5pm Confession 6pm Great Vespers
12 9:40 Hours 10am Divine Liturgy 11:45 Agape 12:30 Evangelism 101	13	14	15 Fish, Wine, Oil 6pm Daily Vespers	16 1-4pm Central State Prison Ministry	17	18 5pm Confession 6pm Great Vespers
19 9:40 Hours 10am Divine Liturgy 11:45 Agape	20 <i>Fr. Theophan @ All American Council in Atlanta</i>	21 <i>Fr. Theophan @ All American Council in Atlanta</i>	22 <i>Fr. Theophan @ All American Council in Atlanta</i> 6pm Readers Vespers	23 <i>Fr. Theophan @ All American Council in Atlanta</i>	24 Wine & Oil <i>Fr. Theophan @ All American Council in Atlanta</i> 7pm Fr. Jonathan Ivanoff Speaking	25 10-3pm Parish Health Team Seminar at Holy Cross 5pm Confession 6pm Great Vespers
26 9:40 Hours 10am Divine Liturgy 11:45 Agape Back to School Prayers	27	28	29 6pm Daily Vespers	30 1-4pm Central State Prison Ministry	31	