

June 2017



SAINT INNOCENT ORTHODOX CHURCH

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June 2017 Newsletter

The Community We All Need

by Fr. Stephen Freeman

I thought this was a good article for us to reflect on as a community.

I once read that the Russian instinct, when under pressure, was to gather with other people, while the American instinct was to flee. Thus, the Russian landscape was marked by villages, while America was marked with isolated homesteads. My Russian knowledge is just hearsay, but I know that Americans like to homestead and to be alone. The American suburb is not a village, it is streets filled with little homesteads, islands of isolation, affectionately known as “my castle.” Americans are also frightfully lonely.

I have served for some thirty-seven years in ordained ministry at six different parishes, and worked in the establishment of a handful of others. Everywhere I have ever served, the topic of “community” has been popular. The very popularity of the topic points to the poignancy of its absence. My thoughts are that community is simply too shameful for most to bear.



The Russian vs. American description (whether accurate or not) will serve to point to the problem. The Russian experience for many centuries was marked not only by the dangers of wolves and the like, but the much more fearful danger of marauding Tartars. Villages and cities were frequently terrorized by an enemy who could occasionally be placated with

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ransom payments, but very rarely defeated. This pattern continued for around 250 years and had profound effects on the shaping of culture. The American experience, similarly faced with a vast open land for settlements, was that of conquering rather than being conquered. They vanquished their foes (native Americans) and took their lands. The so-called "pioneer spirit" was exalted as a virtue, with stories of brave individuals rather than fearful villages.

Communities are not built by pioneers. They are rooted in mutual need and brokenness. Stanley Hauerwas has observed: "My hunch is that you don't just make a community up. You discover that you need one another because you're in danger."

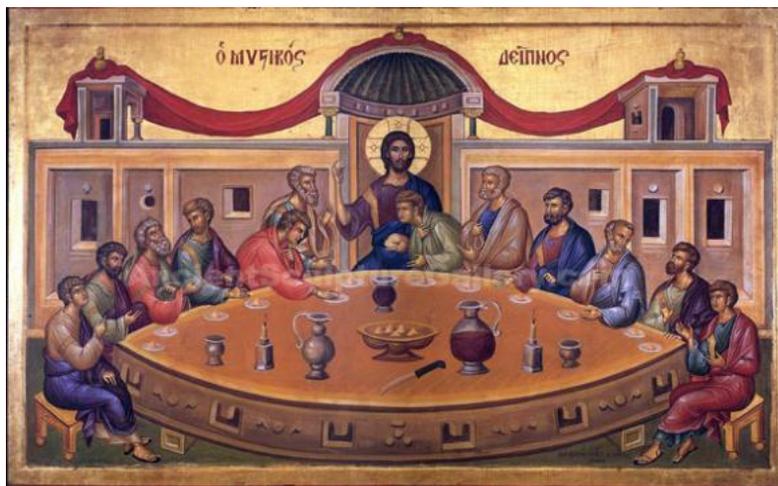
The need, created by various forms of weakness, must be acknowledged and accepted. The "shame" associated with it must be borne by the community as a whole. Without that acceptance, there can never be sufficient safety for a community to form. And this, I think, is the largest obstacle to "community" in our American landscape. We need each other but are both afraid to acknowledge how and in what manner as well as being fearful of our own inadequacy in the face of others' need. It is much easier to talk (and write) about community.

At two points in my life I have been hospitalized with depression-related symptoms. The details are of no public interest, but both experiences were profound. The first was a bust: the treatment was improper and I was far from ready to be there. The second was a complete reverse. I was more than ready to be there, and found myself within a community of

treatment that was simply the safest place I had ever known in my life. It was incredibly diverse in every possible way, including the nature of the various diagnoses. We shared only occasional elements of religious belief. However, the need was extremely clear and vulnerability became a hallmark of most interactions. Its community was profound.

Part of the lore surrounding the American military is that our men do not die for their country. Instead, they die for the guy next to them in the foxhole. The real stories of real wars and real heroes are rarely shared outside of that circle of experience. They are both too shameful and too wonderful.

My parents were extremely nostalgic about both the Great Depression and World War II. They were born in 1924 and were shaped by those great events. When you questioned them, or listened to their stories, there were an abundance of "needy" tales. The poverty of the Great Depression as well as the shared inventiveness of its management



sounded like adventures when I heard them. The war put an entire nation on an equal footing of shared sacrifice and need. There were shortages borne by all.

I was in England a few years back when a news story broke about a pub riot in Scotland regarding England's national soccer team. An Englishman was killed, as I recall. It became a topic of conversation with the cabby who was of my father's generation. "I can't understand it!" he said. "We were in the war together!"

It was not the first time I have heard nostalgic comments about that wartime. Of

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course, it is about a kind of community, enforced by the magnitude of the need.

Our needs are no less great, even though the war is so much less obvious. Privately, even secretly, we are all running short of something, and have just come from one emotional bombardment or another. I see the British war memes almost everywhere: "Keep Calm and Carry On." They still speak to the soul.

The Church is, first and foremost, a community. It is, indeed, the primary community, the communion of God and humanity in Christ. We often think about it as a community of "faith," imagining that it is our shared beliefs that bind us together. And, of course, having failed at any number of points to keep calm and carry on, our faith wanes, or falters, and we feel isolated and excluded. We fear to speak of the alienation.

A careful study of St. Paul's letters makes it clear that we are saved not by our strength (or even our common faith): we are saved by our weakness. Grace is only truly complete and in its fullness in our weakness (2 Cor. 12:9). Strangely, we fear that our weakness (in its various manifestations) will drive others away. In truth, if others are not with you in your weakness, they are not truly with you. We gladly celebrate our strengths, and place great store by our perceived talents. Those things bring us awards and congratulatory attention. But we do not enter into communion through such things – they do not reside in that faculty of the heart where communion can be found. The communion we have with Christ is, strikingly, through His shed blood and His broken body. In a similar fashion, our capacity for communion lines up most closely with that which is most vulnerable – and hence – always very close to the places of our own wounds.

I think that the lived reality of God's-grace-in-our-weakness is largely absent in contemporary Christianity (of every sort). It is, I think, one reason why we are all given over to such boasting. I will easily be misunderstood

when I say that Orthodoxy is the worst of all Christian groups. I mean by this, that we carry the burden of 2,000 years. An honest study of those years should remove any temptation to triumphalism. Someone might ask, "Then why be Orthodox?" I can only answer that I need it and that I have chosen to enter communion with the weakness of the Church through the ages.

The Church in Jerusalem was founded in a shared, common weakness. Its first gatherings were behind locked doors. They had arguments (Thomas). They had failures (Ananias and Sapphira). They argued over doctrine (gentiles) and ministry (neglecting Greek widows). They were prone to factionalism (Corinth) and false teaching (Galatians). The dire warnings contained in the seven letters within Revelation were written to Orthodox communities. There is no historical evidence that the Church learned from its difficulties in the first century and outgrew its problems. It has never(!) been other than it was then.

I can only bear witness that cowering behind locked doors, I have encountered the risen Christ. The sooner we learn to speak the truth about ourselves to one another, and to confess our abject poverty before Christ, the sooner we will know the only community that will ever exist: founded in need, and filled with God.

<https://blogs.ancientfaith.com/glory2godforallthings/2017/05/24/the-community-we-all-need/>

Many Years!

Birthdays

3--Aaron Williams
7--Heidi Hintermaier
15--Nikki Williams
16--Olga Plummer
20--Bianca Lee
29--Elena Dorogy

Anniversaries 30--George and Larisa Moore

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Announcements

- The Parish Council is scheduled to meet on Thursday the 8th at 7pm.
- On Sunday, June 11th we will have an Outreach Committee Meeting. This is our first meeting in a while so please come if you are interested. If you cannot be there let Fr. Theophan know so that you are kept in the loop.
- Fr. Theophan and family will be on vacation from June 12- 27th.
- Fr. Dmitry Oselinsky will be serving the on Saturday the 17th for Vespers and Sunday the 18th for the Divine Liturgy.
- Fr. Seth Earl will be serving on Saturday the 24th for Vespers and Sunday the 25th for the Divine Liturgy.
- The Apostles Fast is from June 12-29th this year.
- On June 28/29 we will celebrate the Feast of the Apostles Peter and Paul. Wednesday the 28th at 6pm we will have Great Vespers and Thursday the 29th we will serve the Diving Liturgy at 9am.
- Confessions are heard *every Saturday after Great Vespers* or before Sunday Liturgy between 9:15- 9:40am. There is no need to schedule an appointment unless it is outside of the above times.

Parish Hall Project Update

- The DOS has approved our proposal to take part in the Managed Debt Program. Once the Bishop blesses this will be fully finalized.
- The trailer is scheduled to be removed July 12-17th which means our final coffee hour in the trailer will be on Sunday July 9th.
 - On Sunday July 9th we will have a Molebin for the Beginning of Work immediately following the Liturgy.
- Before the trailer can be removed we will have to empty the current parish hall and store our stuff. On Saturday, July 8th we

will have a work day to pack, store and clean the parish hall before it is removed by Mod Space.

- If all goes as planned the parish hall project will begin on the week of July 17th. Construction is expected to take around 10 months.

Concrete ways you can help:

Over-all Project

- Please continue to pray for our community and the project; that God would bless and order the construction process.
- Please take a look at the Building our Future Capital Campaign flier and consider pledging. Give your best gift. Any money contributed towards this the Parish Hall project will reduce debt load.

Trailer removal:

- We have to pack and move everything in the trailer which is a lot of work!
- Do you have any free room for us to store things that require a temperate environment? Let Fr. Theophan know.
- Do you have any boxes you can give for storage? Bring them to church as soon as you can.
- Are you good a packing? Come anytime the first week of July and help pack the trailer.
- On Saturday and Sunday July 8-9th will be our last weekend in the trailer. On Saturday the 8th we will probably have a parish work day to get as much as can be done. Come help us pack and move all of our belongings. We are going to need all the help we can get.

Fellowship space

- Once the current parish hall is removed we will not have any dedicated fellowship space. Olivia has offered her home and Fr. Theophan is in discussion with Mt. Zion about using their space once in a while. Would you will willing to host a coffee hour at your home?

The Apostles Fast



The Church calls us to keep this fast according to the example of the holy Apostles, who, having received the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, prepared themselves to preach the Gospels to the whole world.

On the fiftieth day after His rising from the tomb, and the ninth day after His Ascension and sitting at the right hand of the Father, the Lord sent down the Holy Spirit upon all His disciples and Apostles on the day of Pentecost. This is one of the greatest feasts of the Lord. This is the completion of the new, eternal covenant with mankind. When the Holy Spirit came down upon the Apostles, the Spirit of Truth, the Spirit of wisdom and revelation inscribed the new law of Zion in place of the law of Sinai. The law of Sinai gave place to the grace of the Holy Spirit, which confirmed the law [of Moses], and bestowed strength to fulfill the Law of God, which pronounces justification not for works, but by grace.

We do not fast on Pentecost [or during the afterfeast, which is fast-free] because the Lord was with us during those days. He Himself said, Can ye make the children of the bridechamber fast, while the bridegroom is with them?(Lk. 5:34).

"After the extended feast of Pentecost, the fast is particularly needed in order to cleanse

our mind by ascetic labors, and to make us worthy of the gifts of the Holy Spirit," writes St. Leo the Great. "After the present feast, which the Holy Spirit has sanctified by His descent, all the people usually keep a fast beneficially established for the healing of soul and body, and therefore requiring that we spend it with the appropriate reverence. For we do not doubt that after the Apostles' hearts were filled with the Spirit of truth promised to them from on high, amongst the other mystical heavenly teachings given by their Teacher, they were given also the teaching on spiritual continence, so that their hearts, purified by fasting, would be made capable of receiving gifts of grace... It is would not be possible to struggle in a pampered body and fattened flesh against the persecutions, and the fierce threats of the ungodly that lay ahead; for that which delights our outer man destroys our inner man, and the more a wise soul mortifies its flesh, the purer it becomes.

"Therefore, enlightening all the sons and daughters of the Church by their example and instruction, the teachers designated a holy fast at the onset of warfare for Christ, so that as we set out to battle against spiritual depravation, we would have temperance as our weapon, and thus mortify our sinful desires, for our unseen enemies and fleshless foes will not overcome us if we do not give ourselves over to fleshly lusts. Although the tempter constantly and invariably desires to do us harm, he remains powerless and ineffective when he does not find any side of us to attack... This is why the steadfast and saving custom has been established, after these holy and joyful days we have celebrated in honor of the Lord, Who rose from the dead and ascended into heaven, and after we have received the gift of the Holy Spirit, of keeping a fast.

"The custom of earnestly keeping the fast is necessary also in order to preserve those gifts imparted now to the Church from God. Having been made temples of the Holy Spirit, and

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having drunk more than ever the Divine waters, we must not submit to any desires, or serve any vices, so that the habitation of the virtues might not be defiled by any unclean thing. With God's help and cooperation, we can all achieve this, if only we will cleanse ourselves by fasting and almsgiving, strive to free ourselves from sinful impurity, and bring forth abundant fruits of love." Further, St. Leo, Pope of Rome writes, "In the Apostolic canons inspired by God Himself, the Church fathers have, at the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, established first and foremost that all virtuous labors begin with fasting.

"They have done this because God's commandments can be fulfilled well only when Christ's army is protected from all temptations of sin by holy abstinence. Thus, beloved, we must exercise ourselves in fasting especially at the present time, as we are commanded to do at the close of the fifty days that follow the Resurrection of Christ, up to the descent of the Holy Spirit, which we have solemnly observed.

"This fast has been given to us in order to preserve us from slackness, for it is very easy to become slack due to the long period in which we were allowed to eat various foods. If we do not cultivate the field of our flesh continually, thorns and thistles will easily grow there, and produce fruits suitable only for burning, and not for the harvest storehouse. Therefore, we are obligated now to scrupulously preserve those seeds that we received in our hearts from the Heavenly Sower, and take precautions so that the envious foe might not spoil what God has given us, and so that the thorns of vice would not grow in the paradise of virtues. We can only avoid such evil through almsgiving and fasting."

Blessed Simeon of Thessalonika writes that the fast was established in honor of the Apostles, because we have been vouchsafed many blessings through them, and they have been shown to us as doers and teachers of fasting, obedience... and temperance. Even the Latins witness to this, albeit against their will, honoring the Apostles by fasting in

remembrance of them. But in accordance with the Apostolic canons composed by St. Clement, after the descent of the Holy Spirit, we celebrate. Then, beginning from the following week, we honor the Apostles who have instructed us to fast.

How Long is the Apostles Fast?

The duration of the Apostles fast depends upon the date of Pascha, and therefore it varies from year to year. It always begins with the end of the Triodion, or after the week of Pentecost [the Sunday of All Saints], and ends on June 28, if the feast of Saints Peter and Paul does not fall on a Wednesday or Friday.

The fast can be as long as six weeks, and as short as one week and a day.

Patriarch of Antioch Theodore Balsamon (seventh century) said, "All the faithful, monastics and laypeople included, are obligated to fast seven days or more before the feast of Saints Peter and Paul, and let those who do not fast be excommunicated."

What should we eat during the Apostles Fast?

The asceticism of the Apostles fast is less austere than the forty days fast of Great Lent. During the Apostles fast, the Church rubrics prescribe for three days of each week—Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays—abstinence from fish, wine, and oil, taking uncooked food at the ninth hour after Vespers. On the other weekday, abstinence from fish is prescribed.

Fish is allowed on Saturdays and Sundays, as well on the commemoration days of great saints, or on patronal feasts.

<http://www.pravoslavie.ru/english/47148.htm>

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Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
				1 1-4pm Central State Prison Ministry	2	3 6pm Vigil for Pentecost
4 Pentecost 9:40am 3 & 6 th Hours 10am Festal Divine Liturgy Followed by Kneeling Vespers	5 <i>Fr. Theophan day off</i>	6	7 Fast Free 6pm Daily Vespers	8 1-4pm Central State Prison Ministry 7pm Parish Council	9 Fast Free	10 8-3pm Fr. Theophan McRae Mission 6pm Great Vespers 6:45pm Confessions
11 9:40am 3 & 6 th Hours 10am Divine Liturgy 11:45am Agape	12 <i>Fr. Theophan Vacation</i> Ss. Peter and Paul Fast begins	13	14 6pm Readers Vespers	15 1-4pm Central State Prison Ministry	16	17 6pm Great Vespers
18 Fr. Dmitry Sub 9:40am 3 & 6 th Hours 10am Divine Liturgy 11:45am Agape	19	20	21 6pm Readers Vespers	22 1-4pm Central State Prison Ministry	23	24 6pm Great Vespers
25 Fr. Seth Earl Sub 9:40am 3 & 6 th Hours 10am Divine Liturgy 11:45am Agape	26	27 <i>Fr. Theophan Returns</i>	28 6pm Great Vespers Holy Apostles Peter & Paul	29 9am Divine Liturgy for feast of Peter & Paul 1-4pm Central State Prison Ministry	30	

Tentative July 2017

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
						1 6pm Great Vespers 6:45pm Confessions
2 9:40am 3 & 6 th Hours 10am Divine Liturgy 11:45am Agape	3 <i>Fr. Theophan day off</i>	4	5 6pm Daily Vespers	6 1-4pm Central State Prison Ministry	7	8 Parish Hall work day 6pm Great Vespers 6:45pm Confessions
9 9:40am 3 & 6 th Hours 10am Divine Liturgy 11:45am Agape	10 <i>Fr. Theophan day off</i>	11	12 <i>Trailer Removal</i> 6pm Daily Vespers	13 <i>Trailer Removal</i> 1-4pm Central State Prison Ministry	14 <i>Trailer Removal</i>	15 10am Wedding rehearsal in Atl 6pm Great Vespers 6:45pm Confessions
16 9:40am 3 & 6 th Hours 10am Divine Liturgy 11:45am Agape 4:30 pm Wedding in Atl	17 <i>Fr. Theophan day off</i>	18	19 6pm Daily Vespers	20 1-4pm Central State Prison Ministry 7pm Parish Council	21 6pm Paraklesis (Prayer Group)	22 6pm Great Vespers 6:45pm Confessions
23 9:40am 3 & 6 th Hours 10am Divine Liturgy 11:45am Agape	24 DOS Assembly in Chattanooga TN	25 DOS Assembly in Chattanooga TN	26 DOS Assembly in Chattanooga TN	27 DOS Assembly in Chattanooga TN	28 DOS Assembly in Chattanooga TN	29 6pm Great Vespers 6:45pm Confessions
30 9:40am 3 & 6 th Hours 10am Divine Liturgy 11:45am Agape	31 <i>Fr. Theophan day off</i>					