

HOLY TRINITY

ROMANIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH



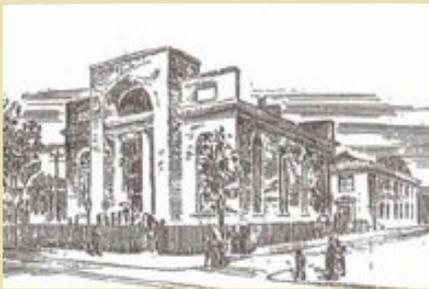
723 N BODINE ST PHILADELPHIA, PA 19123

CHURCH BULLETIN

Vol. 12 No. 28 * Sunday July 7, 2019 * Editor: V. Rev. Fr. Nicolai Buga

The 3rd Sunday after Pentecost

Gospel Reading Matthew 6: 22 - 33



HOLY TRINITY ROMANIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH

723 N Bodine St.
PHILADELPHIA, PA 19123
Tel./Fax: 215-922-7060
www.holytrinityphiladelphia.org
V. Rev. Fr. Nicolai BUGA, Rector
fr.n.buga@gmail.com
Rev. Fr. Timotei AVRAM, parish priest
fr.timavram@gmail.com
Rev. Deacon Petru Bogdan MANEA
pmanea81@gmail.com

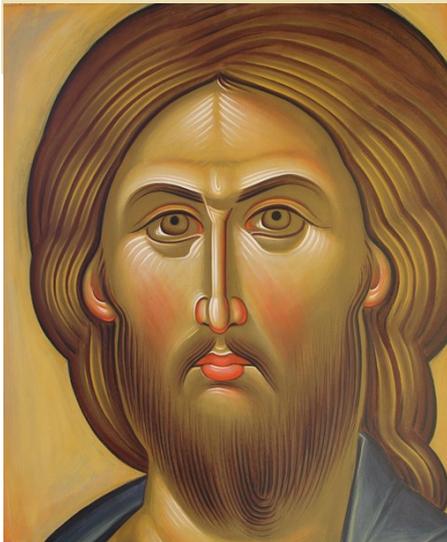
The Lord said, "The eye is the lamp of the body. So, if your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light; but if your eye is unhealthy, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light in you is darkness, how great is the darkness! 'No one can serve two masters; for a slave will either hate the one and love the other, or be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth. 'Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air; they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? And can any of you by

worrying add a single hour to your span of life? And why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you — you of little faith? Therefore do not worry, saying, "What will we eat?" or "What will we drink?" or "What will we wear?" For it is the Gentiles who strive for all these things; and indeed your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

Apostle Reading Romans 5: 1 - 10

Brethren, since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand; and we boast in our hope of sharing the glory of God. And not only that, but we also boast in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us. For while we were still weak, at the

right time Christ died for the ungodly. Indeed, rarely will anyone die for a righteous person — though perhaps for a good person someone might actually dare to die. But God proves his love for us in that while we still were sinners Christ died for us. Much more surely then, now that we have been justified by his blood, will we be saved through him from the wrath of God. For if while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, much more surely, having been reconciled, will we be saved by his life.



INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Gospel Reading	1
Apostle Reading	1
Fr. Philip LeMasters: Idolatry Leads to Anxiety	2-3
Fr. Robert Miclean: On Justification by Faith	4-5
Liturgical Schedule from July 11 to 25, 2021	5

Synaxarion. Sunday July 11, 2029 - Third Sunday after Pentecost: Holy Great Martyr Euphemia; Blessed Princess Olga, Equal-to-the-Apostles, the Enlightener of Russia

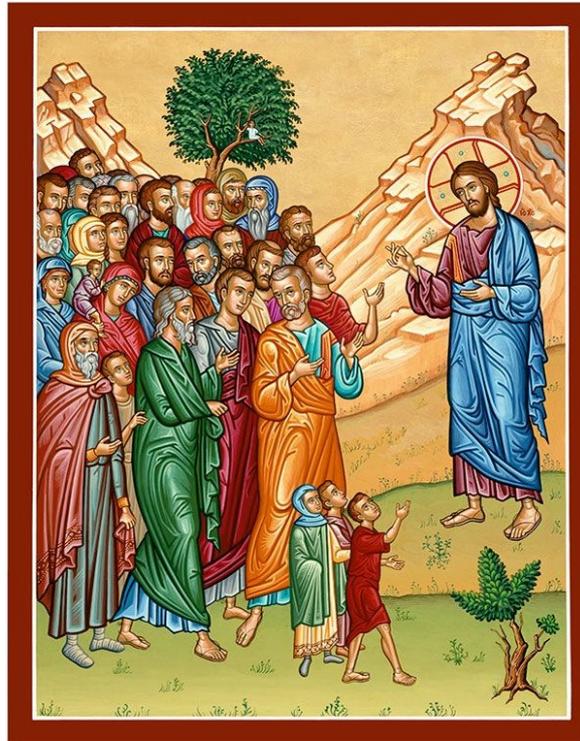
Idolatry Leads to Anxiety

Ours is an age of anxiety. Many people are overcome with worry about matters large and small. Some certainly do need the help of physicians and psychological counselors in order to cope with their fears. The sickness of our souls remains, however, at the very heart of all our collective and personal brokenness. If our souls are not healthy, we will never find the peace that truly satisfies us as God's children who bear His image and likeness.

The Lord spoke of the health of our souls in terms of vision: "The eye is the lamp of the body. So, if your eye is sound, your whole body will be full of light; but if your eye is evil, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!" Christ taught that, if our spiritual vision is clear and focused, we will see ourselves and our problems in light of God's kingdom. Then we will be able to serve our one true Master and gain strength for being at peace, regardless of the circumstances of our lives.

If our spiritual vision is clouded and unfocused, however, we will not have the strength to see our problems and challenges in light of the Kingdom. We will instead stumble in the darkness to the point that we make the passing things of this life our constant obsessions, which is a path only to greater worry, anxiety, and fear. For example, many people make money and possessions false gods for which they will sacrifice just about anything. Jesus Christ teaches that we are not to worry about our food, drink, and clothing. Instead, we are to trust that our Heavenly Father knows that we need these things. "Seek first His kingdom and righteousness, and all these things shall be yours as well."

This teaching does not condemn reasonable provision for a decent life for ourselves and our families. It does not deny that the necessities of life are God's good



blessings. Instead, it gives us a clear example of how spiritual blindness enslaves us to idolatry, which leads only to constant worry. Poverty, hunger, and famine are always possibilities in our world. Economic depression, natural disaster, war, crime, disease, and disability are obvious threats to having adequate food, clothing, and shelter. There is simply no way that we can protect ourselves completely from such dangers. If we make the physical necessities of life our gods, we cannot avoid being consumed by worry about them. That kind of idolatry inevitably fuels anxiety.

If the eyes of our souls are gaining clarity and focus, however, we will not blindly view life's necessities as the highest good, and neither will we make the lack of them the greatest evil. Instead, we will be illumined with the light of Christ to the point that we will see even the worst circumstances of life in this world as opportunities to serve our one true Master. We will already participate in God's reign as we learn to trust more fully that our Heavenly Father will provide what we need in this life and beyond.

When we struggle to see that God cares for us in the midst of our challenges, we must remember St. Paul's example of using suffering and difficulty for growth in holiness: "We also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance, and perseverance character, and character, hope." Not simply wishful thinking, Paul's hope is grounded in "the love of God ... poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit Who was given to us." Christ died for the ungodly, including us, and has sent the Holy Spirit into our hearts and souls to enlighten us with the glory of the Kingdom. In this context, our difficulties and needs are opportunities for gaining greater healing for our souls. We must use these tribulations to gain greater spiritual strength, clarity, and vision by growing in trust, humility, and patience.

When we are overcome with worry about any problem or threat in life, we must use our weakness as an opportunity to gain greater spiritual strength: as a reminder to guard our thoughts as we turn our attention from obsessing about what we cannot change to a vision by growing in trust, humility, and patience.

When we are overcome with worry about any problem or threat in life, we must use our weakness as an opportunity to gain greater spiritual strength: as a reminder to guard our thoughts as we turn our attention from obsessing about what we cannot change to an earnest, humble plea for the Lord's healing mercy. That is how we will open ourselves to greater participation in His life and, thus, find true peace.

Some lose the joy of life because of worry fueled by the love of money; others become miserable because of domination by anger, fear, lust, gluttony, self-righteousness, or other passions. These and all our other habitual sins are symptoms of our spiritual blindness, of our darkened souls which keep us from seeing ourselves, others, and the entire creation in the glorious light of the Kingdom. As long as we remain in the dark, we will never see anything clearly and easily stumble and fall.

Those who are sick do not need relief only for their symptoms; they require healing from the causes of their disease. They need therapy that goes to the heart of the matter. We will find that kind of healing in the spiritual life by: opening our souls to the light of Christ through daily prayer; reading the Bible and the lives and teachings of the Saints; and watching our minds and mouths to reject thoughts and words that are not pleasing to God. We will find it by fasting in order to humble ourselves before the Lord and gain strength in refusing to be enslaved to selfish desires. We will find it by taking confession on a regular basis as we embrace the mercy of the Lord through sincere repentance. We will find it by: forgiving those who have wronged us and asking forgiveness of those we have wronged; giving generously of our time, attention, and resources to those in need; and attending the Divine Liturgy regularly as we receive the Body and Blood of Christ as often as possible.

This way of life is for our healing; it is for our good. It is what is necessary for us to open our darkened souls to the brilliant light of Christ as we learn to seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness. It is how we may gain the clarity and strength to serve our one true Master

as we come to place our problems, fears, and worries in the context of trust in a Lord Who has conquered even death itself for our salvation purely out of love for His sons and daughters.

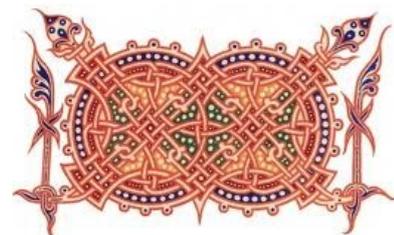
Regardless of the form that darkness takes in our lives, we must not despair. Instead, we must use our weakness and pain as reminders to open ourselves to the light of Christ as best we can. Stumbling around with our eyes closed is a good way to become disoriented and hurt ourselves.

All of us have probably learned from experience that nothing but brokenness, pain, and worry come from embracing spiritual blindness. Since God created us in His image and likeness, we will never find ultimate satisfaction by looking for fulfillment in the passing things of this world. Doing so will only make us miserable and weak.

Let us, then, open ourselves to the healing light of Christ, trusting that He will respond graciously to even our small, faltering steps to put our lives in the context of His Kingdom. That is the ultimate cure for our worries. If we trust primarily in ourselves and what we can get by using worldly things according to our own designs, we will inevitably be consumed by anxiety and fear. But if we gain the spiritual clarity to behold all things in the light of His glory, we will know peace from the depths of our souls.

The One Who dwells in our hearts has conquered even death itself and made us participants in His eternal life. He delivers us from slavery to the fears that are rooted in our blindness. He makes it possible for us to experience already the joy of heaven even as we live and breathe in this world with all of its and our problems. As the Lord said, "Seek first His kingdom and righteousness, and all these things shall be yours as well."

Fr. Philip LeMasters



Orthodox Homily on Justification by Faith

St. Paul reminds us of this truth today: we are justified by faith. It's faith which is life-saving for us because it is faith, which gives us access into the deifying, life-changing, transformative grace of God.

Now faith is one of those theological concepts in the Church that's sometimes difficult to understand or apply. Consider then this definition of faith from St. Paul in Hebrews:

“faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen” (Heb. 11:1).

St. Paul says in today's Epistle that it's faith that enables us to rejoice in hope of the glory of God. In other words, just like our definition out of Hebrews, St. Paul is here linking faith and hope, hope and faith.

God is continuously pouring out His grace on us, drawing us to Himself—as much as we are willing to cooperate with the Holy Spirit. But that's just it: faith demands action. The old debate between Lutheranism and Catholicism regarding justification by faith or works is a false dichotomy: it's not one OR the other. Instead, both are needed, both are mutually dependent.

Faith can never be a mere verbal pronouncement of belief. At the same time, the primary work of the Church is not philanthropy but the witness of faith, of living out the faith in the midst of those who do not yet believe so that they too may come to know Christ and His salvation. This is the example we have from the Apostles and the Saints: some were martyrs, some were evangelists, some were preachers, some were teachers, etc., but all were witnesses of the one, true faith; they're known today because they led others to the knowledge and love of God and His salvation through their witness.

“Faith is the assurance of things hoped for...” In other words, if our hope is that God will heal us, save us through our participation in His life, which He manifests to us here and now through the Sacraments, through our prayers, then if this is our hope, if this is what we desire above all else, then, we pray and struggle to follow through, to cooperate with what God prescribes for us.

But we must ask ourselves, is this really our aim? Do we want God and participation in His life more than anything else? If we are to find faith, it must be so. Christ reminds us today, “No one can serve two masters;



for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.”

In other words, if life and communion with God, healing from our sin-sickness and salvation, is our desire, then we make growth in faith our chief aim. We cannot be absorbed in, we cannot be a slave to, our desire for the things of this world—all of which are passing

away.

Similarly, St. Paul admonishes us elsewhere in Romans, not to be “conformed to this world, but (to) be transformed by the renewing of your mind.” Mind here means the nous, the ‘eye of the soul,’ the very core of our being, the part of us capable of communing with God even now.

Just as Christ does, St. Paul warns us that two choices lie before us: either conformity to the culture, the world, and its priorities and ideas, or transformation through the life in Christ, which, by necessity means that we must continue to change, to grow in faith, becoming more and more Christ-like in the very core of our being.

The world, the culture, will pull us in its direction, may try to convince us that we don't need God or that what God has revealed is antiquated and archaic, no longer relevant, that mankind, having ‘progressed’ so much, no longer needs God, as our modern secularists espouse.

Faith demands that we strive to follow the narrow way of Christ, the proven path that has led all the generations before us who have sought first the Kingdom of God to find and live the truth of Christ, even in the midst of who reject Him in the culture and the world around them. This is God's greatest desire for us because faith is necessary to enter the Kingdom of God.

Faith is never just a professing of words of belief; faith leads to action on part, foremost repentance and a desire to continue to “work out your salvation with fear and trembling,” (Phil. 2:12) in the words of St. Paul. Through faith, we grow further up and further in our communion with God in His Kingdom, and so, for us who wish to be saved, our spiritual progress, our deification, can never leave us where we are today, but instead must bring further growth.

This growth in communion with God, in the knowledge

and love of Him, is God's unchanging will for the human race. Our prayers for transformation, for growth to become godly men and women, never go unanswered, if we are willing to allow Him to transform our minds (the very core of our being), if we are willing to seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness above all competing temporal pursuits.

The problem of our lack of faith, we may come to realize, is ourselves: we put our faith in earthly things, in mammon, money, in other earthly pursuits. We prefer to rely on ourselves and our own ideas or that of our culture that would conform us to its own religion, its own idols.

For this reason, Christ God warns us: you cannot serve two masters! But we always have a choice: we can respond to our anxieties, problems, our stress by trying to 'fix' them on our own and on our own terms, which may make us THINK that we're powerful, we're in control, or we can realize that that projection is just a façade and that we each need God, need to struggle and strive to put our trust, our faith and hope, in Him, in God, who alone is eternal, who alone is worthy of our trust, our faith, our hope. The choice is ours, but we cannot serve both.

Jesus assures us today, "Seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you" (Matt. 6:33). No one is beyond the transformation and growth in holiness that God desires to give us so that we may abide with Him in His eternal Kingdom. We grow in faith by living out our faith. Faith begins with a desire conceived from a willingness to seek first God's Kingdom, our communion before all else.

When we choose to interject faith into our struggles, even our tribulations, they become means for our further growth, for, as St. Paul says, "tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not disappoint..." Why, because God is faithful even when we or our fellow human beings disappoint.

So put it into practice: pray, repent, make confession, receive the Eucharist, tithe, serve. Step forward in faith, put your hope in God for the things you need. Let God free you from any dependence on this world or conformity to the "go it alone approach" of our culture. God will grow us in faith. St. Paul assures us, "hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit." Put your hope, your trust, your faith in God, cooperate with the Holy Spirit, following the prescriptions Christ has entrusted to the Church for our healing and growth in Him. He is always faithful, for as He has said, "Seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you!"

Fr. Robert Miclean



HOLY TRINITY'S Liturgical Schedule from July 11 to July 25, 2021

(Sunday July 11 (Third Sunday after Pentecost):

9:00 am - Matins
10:00 am - Holy Liturgy
11:00 pm - Sunday School
12:00 pm - Coffee Hour
1:00 pm - Baptism Sofia Rose Abele

Sunday July 18 (Fourth Sunday after Pentecost):

9:00 am - Matins
10:00 am - Holy Liturgy
11:00 pm - Sunday School
12:00 pm - Coffee hour

Tuesday July 20 - Holy Prophet Elias:

9:00 am - Matins
10:00 am - Holy Liturgy
12:00 pm - Coffee hour

Sunday July 25 (Fifth Sunday after Pentecost):

9:00 am - Matins
10:00 am - Holy Liturgy
11:00 pm - Sunday School
12:00 pm - Coffee hour

